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ABSTRACT

One of a series written for the beginning caregiver or teacher in a military child care center, this staff development module aims to provide practice in making decisions in problematic sitations concerning school-age children. The module offers several discussions of issues related to the topic of child care for school-age children. These discussions offer guidelines for orienting center care to meet basic needs of school-age children, for maintaining their interest, for understanding effects of caregiver behavior on children at the primary level, for helping children deal with their feelings and behave in acceptable ways, and for meeting the needs of older children in school-age care. Multiple-choice skill-building exercises, relating mainly to primary-school students in center care, are included after most discussions in order to suggest alternatives for conducting activities. Also provided are "preview" and "postview" items for self-evaluation. (RH)

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Department of Defense

Caring For School-Age Children

Staff Development Series

Military Child Care Project

PS013155

April 1982

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
MANPOWER, RESERVE AFFAIRS, AND LOGISTICS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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MANPOWER,
RESERVE AFFAIRS
AND LOGISTICS
(Military Personnel and Force Management)

01 APR 1982

FOREWORD

This series of manuals for Child Care Givers on DoD Installations is issued under the authority of DoD Instruction 6060.1, "Training Manuals for Child Care Givers on DoD Installations," January 19, 1981. Its purpose is to provide child care givers with training materials that include the latest techniques and procedures for the safe care and guiding development of children entrusted to their care.

This series of manuals, DoD 6060.1-M-1 through DoD 6060.1-M-17, was developed under the auspices of the Department of Health and Human Services by the Department of Army, in cooperation with the Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

The provisions of this series of manuals apply to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, and the Defense Agencies (hereafter referred to as DoD Components) whose heads shall ensure that the manuals are distributed or otherwise made available to all child care givers on DoD installations and that these materials are used in regional and inter-Service workshops, seminars, and training sessions.

This series of manuals is effective immediately.

Send recommended changes to the manuals through channels to:

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R. Dean Tice
Lieutenant General, USA
Deputy Assistant Secretary

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME to a staff development module written for the "caregiver" or "teacher" in a military child care center. Thoughts and ideas for working with six- through twelve-year-old children will be shared with you in this module, *Caring For School-Age Children*.

Self-paced instruction has been used in this module so you can work on your own and at your own speed. As you begin the module we have included a preview of a few situations with choices of ways to handle them that you may try. Read the situation, think about the solutions, then circle the best answer. You may wish to compare your answers with ours on page 172. Since you are just beginning, work slowly. Remember it is the purpose of the module to allow you to practice making some decisions about your actions in working with school-age children. We recognize that your experiences with school-age youngsters will be unique. However, actions that have worked for other caregivers may give you some ideas for handling situations that you may come to in the future.

The school-age years are very important ones. Child care for these youngsters may be available before and after school hours, in the evening for those parents who work odd hours or late shifts, and during weeks or months of school vacation. However, it is necessary that the care given not be an extension of the school day or school year with school-like routines and expectations. School-age care should be relaxed, fun and educational but not in a textbook way. It should be supportive and helpful to parents and children. It should be informal without the pressure, stress or strain that often is a part of the school and/or home life of some children. The child care center should act as an enjoyable retreat from school life and a transition between home and school for these children.

So you can better understand the emphasis in this module, here are some facts. While child care centers often are able to take children from six to twelve years of age, most of the children who come to the center will be six, seven and eight year olds. They will be first, second and third graders. Of the others, most will be nine years old or in the fourth grade. That is why this module gives more attention to younger school-age children - youngsters who are nine and under.

With this in mind, the preview is followed by several sections which discuss school-age child care. The first of these is titled "What Should Child Care Be For School-Age Children?" The module talks about what these children like to do, their feelings and worries and what adult behavior means to them as growing children. Another section presents difficult behaviors in school-age children and how you can help. There also are a few short pages on how to encourage children to take an interest in their own health, appearance and general well-being. The last section, "What About The Older Child In School-Age Care?" tunes in to the ten, eleven and twelve year old who may be a part of school-age care in your center from time to time.

In most sections of this module, situations that really have taken place with school-age children are described. We provide you with choices of ways to handle each situation. Then, when you turn the page, you will find why we think one answer is better than the others. We recognize that often the right answer is easier to choose when a caregiver has the chance to view the *real* situation with the *real* child. Our hope in presenting these study samples is that you have time to think - before some of these problems occur on the job in the child care center.

While the situations cannot cover *all* experiences you might have with school-age youngsters, the more common or difficult are presented for you to study. It should be noted that solutions presented are not the only possible answers. You may be able to think of others not listed. Just remember this module is a learning tool. It will help you increase your knowledge and understanding of six through twelve year olds. It also will encourage you to think about working with them, and get you to consider the effects of your actions.

At the end of the module you will find another set of situations and ways to handle them. It will be interesting for you to check yourself on what you have learned by comparing the answers you select on the PREVIEW before you read the module with the ones you choose in the POSTVIEW at the end of the module.

This module, *Caring For School-Age Children*, will tell you what school-age children are like and how you can provide for their needs.

School-age children *are* growing in uneven spurts.

SO

School-age children *need* to learn about good NUTRITION for sound HEALTH.

School-age children *are* still young.

SO

School-age children *need* to feel a sense of SECURITY and belonging.

School-age children *are* inventive.

SO

School-age children *need* FREEDOM with guidance.

School-age children *are* looking for rules.

SO

School-age children *need* a STRUCTURE or routine to follow.

School-age children *are* self-conscious.

SO

School-age children *need* COMPASSION, acceptance and understanding.

School-age children *are* maturing at different rates.

SO

School-age children *need* adults who respect DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFERENCES.

School-age children *are* adventurous.

SO

School-age children *need* CHALLENGE to hold their interests.

Here are the situations with choices of possible ways to handle them which we promised you. Think about each situation and then circle what you believe to be the best way to handle the situation. When you have finished, you may want to compare your answers with ours (see page 172). By doing this, you will have some idea of what you will learn in this module about caring for school-age children.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF . . .

1. Gina arrives at the center today all excited about her family's new boat. She has pictures to show everyone. Which of the following would be the best response? You say:

   A. "Gina, I think she is the prettiest boat I've ever seen."

   B. "Gina, have you picked a name for her yet?"

   C. "Gina, what will you do in your new boat?"

2. Troy, Lisa and Tally have formed their own private club. They are the only members. They have a secret password, membership card and hand signals. Some of the other youngsters are beginning to complain about being left out. What would you do?

   A. Tell Troy, Lisa and Tally their club is not fair to the others. Encourage them to make new friends.

   B. Get the others involved in a game or project. Turn their attention away from the three club members.

   C. Say, "Troy - you, Lisa and Tally let others join your club. It's more fun when there are more members."

3. You want a group of older school-age children to know what is expected of them in the arts and crafts area. What is the best way to proceed?

   A. Say, "You can make whatever you like with the materials on the tables. All I ask is that you share the supplies with each other and clean up after you are done with your project."

   B. Simply direct them to the arts and crafts tables. They are old enough to be able to manage on their own. By ten, eleven and twelve years of age children don't need any such reminders.

   C. Say, "Before we begin, here are the rules. One: No hogging all the glue. Two: Pick up all the mess on the tables and floor. Three: Wash your hands before leaving the tables...." and so on.

4. It is most important that school-age care:

   A. Offer youngsters a chance to develop close friendships and explore special interests which school may not allow.

   B. Offer youngsters a time and place to work on homework and other school-related tasks without interruption.

   C. Offer school-age children substitutes for their parents and families.

5. Which item below best describes school-age children as a group?

   A. They like to read, write poems and do quiet, alone type activities after a hectic day at school.

   B. They love to celebrate most any occasion and fun, exciting surprises are always welcome.

   C. They want most to just sit and talk with you and other understanding adults.

6. Six-year-old Shannon is an *"I can't" girl*. Every time you encourage her to do something she says, "But I can't. I'm just not good at that." What can be done to help Shannon think she can do things well?"

   A. When children this age say such things, realize that it is just a stage of growing up that all children go through. There is not much need for your concern because it, too, will pass.

   B. Do not let her give up so easily. Push Shannon into an activity even if she seems not at all eager to join. This way she will discover for herself that she can do some things well.

   C. When you see Shannon doing something on her own, give her your praise. "Shannon, you are a good ball catcher. Here, let's play catch together."

7. Winona is 11 years old. She is a very bright child and seems to be mature for her age. After you finish explaining the rules to a new game, she suggests that one of the rules seems unfair. What would you say?

   A. "Winona, I really don't understand it myself. But that is the rule so that's how the game will be played."

   B. "Winona, maybe you can explain a more fair way. Perhaps there is something we haven't thought of."

   C. "Well, it seems to be a good rule to me. Let's try to play the game anyway. I'm sure it will work out."

8. Seven-year-old Debra spends much of her time telling you what the other children do that is wrong. This constant tattling is beginning to bother you. What do you do?

   A. Just ignore Debra when she tattles. Let her know that you don't want to hear about all the wrong things everyone is doing.

   B. Say, "Debra, you know, I would like you a lot more if you would stop being such a tattle-tale."

   C. Say, "Debra, let me take care of the other children. I can see when they are doing something wrong. That is not your job."

9. Ten-year-old Karl is at the age where he insists it is always important to tell the truth. You have tried to explain to him that sometimes honesty can hurt feelings. But Karl does not seem to accept that as a good reason for not telling the truth. Today he tells you that his father thinks you are too fat and should go on a diet. You are hurt by his comment because you have always been somewhat self-conscious about your weight. What could you do?

   A. Just smile at Karl and tell him to go on his way. Suggest that your weight is none of his business.

   B. Take Karl aside and explain how you feel. Let him know that you feel embarrassed and hurt.

   C. Say, "Well, Karl, that makes two of us. Your father is not exactly in the best of shape either."

10. Jeffrey is somewhat small for a ten year old. He has been teased from time to time by others his age. Each time he becomes upset whenever this happens. How can you help Jeffrey?

   A. Encourage Jeffrey to play with younger children who are more his size.

   B. Make group discussions about differences in people a regular part of the routine. Let children know that differences are normal.

   C. Tell Jeffrey's parents you are very concerned because Jeffrey is small. Suggest he see a doctor soon.

11. Ray Jim is very competitive. He becomes very unhappy if his baseball team does not win. How can baseball be more fun for him?

   A. Do not have teams all the time. Simply change positions often. Have each player see how he or she improves with practice.

   B. Tell the children that they can play baseball but without keeping score. One team does not have to win.

   C. Tell Ray Jim that he must learn to be a good loser. Remind him that his team can't win all the time.

12. Carlos is eight. He has just arrived from school very excited about something. He is eager to tell you all about it. But you are in the middle of preparing snack for all the school-age children. What is the best way to handle this situation?

    A. Say, "Carlos, if you can wait just a few minutes, I will have these trays full. Then you can tell me your news."

    B. Tell Carlos that his good news will have to wait until after you are done serving snack and the tables have been cleared.

    C. Take a few moments to sit and talk with Carlos. Then let him help you fill the snack trays and set them on the tables.

13. You are trying without success to lead a group of school-age children in singing a round. Chip is quick to point out your failure. What could you do?

    A. Have Chip help you lead the round.

    B. Ask Chip to leave the group.

    C. Tell Chip you are doing your best.

14. Randy, age seven, has just returned to the center after attending his grandfather's funeral. He asks you, "Why do people die?" How would you answer?

    A. "Randy, we don't always know why, but everyone dies sooner or later. Do you know why your grandpa died?

    B. "Randy, sometimes people are so sick or hurt that they just die."

    C. "Randy, when people get old they are not as strong as they used to be. So they die."

15. Jill has learned that her parents plan to divorce. She is confused and like most youngsters asks why. What do you say to her?

    A. "Jill, when two people no longer love each other they often get a divorce."

    B. "Jill, divorce is something that happens when parents are unhappy at home."

    C. "Jill, sometimes parents decide they can no longer live together. What have your parents told you?"

16. Eight-year-old Douglas and his family have just moved over 3,000 miles from their old home. Douglas seems afraid to meet new children and join in their activities. How can you make him feel more secure?

    A. Give Douglas a chance to solve this problem for himself in his own way.

    B. Ask a small group of children to get Douglas to play with them and be his friends.

    C. Find out what kinds of things interest Douglas most. Get him involved in such activities.

17. Sharon and Willa are playing dominoes. Sharon calls Willa a cheater. An argument begins. What would you do?

    A. Say, "No one likes to play with a cheater. Now let's try to play according to the rules."

    B. Do not take sides. Let the youngsters try to handle the matter on their own.

    C. Suggest they stop playing until they can play the game without cheating.

18. What is the best way to respond to a child who lies for the first time?

    A. Don't get excited, but let a child know you prefer honesty.

    B. Let the child see how shocked and disappointed you are.

    C. Tell the child you and the others do not like liars.

19. Christine tries to win the friendship of others by scaring them into being her friend. How can you help her?

    A. Explain to her that nobody wants to be friends with a bully who scares them all the time.

    B. Give Christine more of your time. Find activities for her in which she does well.

    C. Tell the other children to ignore her until she can be nice to them.

20. You have seen Phyllis take another child's bracelet. When you ask her why she took it she says, "I don't know." What could you do?

A. Have Phyllis sit by herself until she can tell you why she took the bracelet. She must know why.

B. Say, "Phyllis, how can that be? You must know why you took the bracelet. I'm sure you can think of a reason."

C. This could be an honest answer. She is not offering an excuse. Rather she is admitting her guilt.

SENSITIVE TO THEIR FEELINGS AND NEEDS

Know That Some May Resent Child Care

It most definitely must be noted that many school-age youngsters resent day care. They do not like the idea of being "taken care of" or "babysat." That is how they see day care for them. Too often these same children have no choice in the matter, either. And that fact simply adds to their resentful feelings. They may be teased by other friends about being "babies," about not being able to care for themselves. Yet they are at an age when they think they are able to be on their own before and after school, even during summer vacation. As a caregiver you must recognize their lack of enthusiasm for an activity you may have planned, a field trip or guest visitor in the center. Much unpleasant behavior can and does occur because of these very real feelings many children have.

Make After-School Time Special

School-age child care is or can be many things. But one thing it should not be is more school. It must not be a repeat or extension of the school day with school-like routines, activities and rules. That would be unfair to all concerned, especially the children. This is a theme this module will bring out time and again, not to bore you but to impress upon you its importance.

Have Fun And Remember That They're Just Learning, Too

Do not rob yourself and the youngsters of the opportunities to talk, play and share together in an atmosphere that is fun, free and sparked with enthusiasm. Remember, school-age children look to the important adults in their lives for guidance, leadership and understanding. There will be times that will try your patience. But the child is now at an age when he is learning to be patient with you, too. Perhaps that comes as a surprise. Yet ask yourself if this is not true, particularly as you work in school-age child care.

Develop Trust And The Right To Disagree

Be honest. You and the child are entering a time of agreement and disagreement. You and she will not always see eye to eye. You will not always be right. And if there is trust and confidence between you and the child, she will tell you when you are wrong. At the same time she will stand firmly behind you when you are right. She will ask your opinion or come to you for the answer. She sees you as a valuable person. Since she likes you she wants you to like her.

Think About How It Felt To Be A Young School-ager

The secret to liking someone is through understanding. So take yourself back in time. Try to recall when you were a first grader with a couple of front teeth missing every time you smiled or tried to talk. Or, maybe you are getting ready for your ninth birthday and the party list definitely does not include members of the opposite sex. If such memories seem too hard to recall, perhaps you have or have had children at home of this age. Can you think of some of those experiences that might make you a better caregiver today? See if any of the following, when brought to mind, help recall "the good old days."

Expect Six To Be An Active And Affectionate Age

The six year old can be a delightful child. She also can be a one-person wrecking crew. She is unpredictable - loving and affectionate one day, self-centered and demanding the next. One moment she is in a big hurry to get things done right now. The next moment she can be so slow that you are sure a turtle could move faster. She is very sensitive to being criticized or rejected. She wiggles and squirms constantly. She never seems to sit still without an itch here or a twitch there. She likes the company of older children. But she has no time or patience for younger ones. Friendships come and go with ease. She usually has a best friend, but the person who holds that title may change often, too. Friends of the same sex seem more interesting. The six year old probably likes school very much. School marks the beginning of a whole new stage in life. If all goes well it will take up most of her time and energy. While the young school-age child prefers friends of her own sex, it is not at all uncommon for a first grader to love her teacher regardless of the teacher's sex. More than one little girl has been crushed when she found out Mr. Hobbs already has a girlfriend or wife.

Recognize That Seven Is A Time Of Sensitive Feelings

The child of seven is more quiet than the six year old. He understands more of what goes on at school. He is less talkative and less unpredictable. The seven year old is sensitive to the reactions of others. He is helpful and polite. He certainly is more willing to take suggestions. He usually likes school and is impatient to know immediately how he has done. Seven now has a larger circle of friends. He finds it easier to play as a member of a large group. However, group play is loosely organized. Rules are not yet all important, but they do count. He discovers that playing and being alone are fun, too. He enjoys playing away from adults in secret

hideaways. The seven year old is a good listener. He likes you to read to him. He no longer likes to leave things unfinished. Completing a task is very important. Seven can be moody or complaining to the point of extremes. "Nobody likes me" or "I'm just sure I was adopted." Temper tantrums are less common than before. Instead he will remove himself from the scene of a disagreement and try the pouting or sulking routine. Seven is growing ever more concerned about the wrongness of lying, cheating and stealing. While Six is more a child of action, Seven is more a child of feeling. He thinks more about his experiences in terms of how they make him feel. He is growing up. Tooth fairies and Santa Claus may soon become beliefs of the past.

Watch For Curiosity And Concern With Friendships At Eight

Eight likes to carry on conversations with you rather than just talk chit-chat. She can be a big help when you never seem to have enough hands to go around. Eight is very concerned about friends. One of the things she likes most about going to school or coming to the center is her friends. The eight year old begins to criticize herself. She compares herself to others. She is eager to show you only her best. She is very sensitive about things she does not do well. Eight has a good appetite even if she was a poor eater before. She takes less time to wash her hands and face because she has more important things to do. She must be reminded of these routines, too. She is fond of fiddling with gadgets. Her curiosity seems to know no boundary. As a result she has been known to get carried away with her experimenting. At eight the child has fewer fears. Her fear of the dark has probably lessened. However, she still fears a fight or not being liked. In an attempt to hide her own fears she enjoys scaring others with a "Boo" or telling spooky stories. Also, Eight likes to tease but she is not so good about taking it in return. She seems to enjoy watching adults make mistakes. So you can expect her to bring any of yours to everyone's attention. It is one way of trying to deal with the less-than-perfect world she is beginning to know.

Expect Nines To Be Confident And Enjoy Organized Games

The nine year old has more self-confidence. He has a better idea of who he is and where he is going. He is patient and can accept his own shortcomings or mistakes more easily. Nine is better organized. He makes plans and is able to budget his time. Friends are extremely important. No one is more unhappy than he if he has no friend to play with. Games with well-defined rules and organized clubs are a big part of his life. He is beginning to

look for activities which are more involved or difficult and so more time-consuming. He is interested in learning new skills. He loves to read, bringing books from home. There is a growing interest in magazines and other adultlike materials. Nine is a great collector. He will collect sample after sample of anything of interest to him. What's more, he is thrilled if you ask to see these collections. The nine year old is capable of real abstract thinking - of picturing things that could but do not exist. This becomes a fun game at times. Daydreaming may be a common, daily occurrence. Doing well in school is important to Nine. He is very aware of how well his classmates are doing. Competition is a part of his life. He likes spelling bees, relay races and team sports. Honesty is important to a child this age. He is eager to say things like, "I'll have to be honest. I forgot to tell my mother." Nine is great at making excuses for things he does not understand or which go wrong. He does his fair share of fighting back. He is not going to ignore the hitting or teasing of other children. He is more likely to fight his own battles. At this age he may be self-conscious in front of a group. Giggling or showing off may result. Nine also gets along well with and seems to enjoy little children. He may be delighted at your suggestion to read a story to the toddlers or play with the babies at the center. Often a school-age child seems to know without being told just what to say or what to do when he is with little children. Such moments, if not overdone or misused, can be especially important for the school-ager who is an only child or the youngest child in his family. Privacy is important, too. A sign on the clubhouse door - PRIVATE, KEEP OUT - means IF YOU ARE NOT NINE, GO AWAY.

Don't Expect All Children To Act Their Ages

Of course, you know that a six year old does not suddenly stop behaving like six the day she turns seven. Neither does a nine year old always act his age. These descriptions are simple guides to what you can expect, in general, from younger school-age children at any given age. At times a child will seem very grown up - gentle, kind and courteous. At other times the same child may seem no more grown up than a two year old - stomping, screaming and wanting his own way.

Enjoy The Challenge Of Individual Differences

Well, so it goes. These are the things that make school-age care interesting and certainly a challenge for caregivers. You may be delighted that the child finally has reached an age where she can discuss things on a level you can understand. Your patience has paid off at last. It's always good to have a nice, warm heart-to-heart conversation with a child. However, do not be too dismayed if you ask, "How was your family's vacation in Hawaii?" and she says, "O.K." "Well, what did you do for two whole weeks?" "Oh, nothing much." Sound familiar? It should. It's all very normal - just one of the many things that may find you scratching your head from time to time.

SUPPORTIVE OF THEIR INTERESTS AND GROWTH

Be Aware Of Their Need To Be Accepted By The Group

There are many qualities and characteristics that youngsters this age have in common. Conforming to group standards is important to them. They want be be like others and do what others do. They are especially aware of family differences in income, race and culture. For instance, they learn what it means to have more or less money to spend than someone else. They want to learn how to behave so they can be accepted.

Offer Them Positive Ways To Use Their Curiosity

They are great explorers. Their interest in the world is real. They need to know the *hows* and *whys* of everything. Curiosity can be both friend and foe. It can lead them into trouble. So you need to direct their energies into constructive areas.

Recognize Their Sense Of Fair Play

School-age children absolutely insist upon justice. "It isn't fair" is a common complaint. Sixes see a rule as a rule - no exceptions allowed. Sevens and eights can see that rules are not quite so rigid. They understand that changes are sometimes needed depending on the people and the situation. Nines are beginning to realize that rules are tied to basic moral issues - stealing is wrong because....

Help Them Accept Their Mistakes And Recognize When Something Is Too Hard

Sixes through Nines are proud of being good workers. Since, at this age, work still is more in the form of play, children can more easily accept their mistakes. Your guidance can be a big help to them. Sometimes school-agers are overly ambitious. They take on more than they can handle. But that's all

part of growing up, too. It is best they experience some failures now when the stakes are not quite so high. When they bring the failures on themselves, they learn to do better the next time around. Experiencing some failures at a young age means being able to live with failure at a later age. However, you should teach them how to give up when they realize something is too hard. Too many defeats are not good.

Give Them Time To Explore

Allow them time to explore and experiment. The boys often are more rough and daring than girls. That may be because they are expected to be that way. So they are allowed more freedom. It also might be that their greater physical energy and strength make them more adventurous.

Set A Good Example

As children grow they learn more self-control. They come to understand why they cannot always have their ways. They learn to give love as well as receive it. They learn that patience and kindness are appreciated by others. However, these children still will go back and forth. Life is full of all sorts of temptations. Your values and beliefs probably will become a part of theirs. The more they see you as a kind, patient person the more they will want to be like you.

Expect A Wide Variety Of Personalities And Physical Differences

As a group, younger school-age children are a long way from adulthood. Yet they certainly are not babies anymore, either. Physical growth is slow but steady. Girls usually are six months to several years ahead of boys in physical development. Vision continues to improve until age seven or eight. Mental development is very rapid. School-age children are eager adventurers who often find, to their disappointment, that they still have a lot to learn. Expect different beliefs and ideas at this age - different from yours and from one another. Some children are always happy, no matter what goes on around them. Some are sensitive to your feelings. Others could care less. Some youngsters will be easily upset. Others seem to take setbacks in stride. There will be bullies and teasers. There will be liars and cheaters. There will be the clowns and the show-offs. Each child will be different with special feelings, needs and problems. Each will have his or her own special charm.

Recognize The Importance Of School-age Care

Now, how does all this relate to the question, Why have school-age child care anyway? Aren't they old enough to care for themselves before and after a long day at school? They're too old to play, aren't they? Can't they find things on their own to keep busy until the rest of the family comes home?

Make It A Place That Is Safe For Feelings

The fact of the matter is this: Children need someplace to play, things to do and people to be with throughout the day. All their energies have to be directed by adults who care. School is a very formal setting in which youngsters are pressured into behaving and performing in a certain way. As a young child grows, he needs much more than facts and figures. He has a desperate need to feel close to children his age and to special adults in his life. Through these relationships he can learn to discuss his problems, his feelings and concerns. Such moments are seldom if ever available to the child in a typical school classroom.

Be Open And Create A Relaxed Mood

School-age care must allow the child a chance to work off her stored up energy and frustration. She must have some way to relieve the anxiety created by competition at school or obedience at home. And all this must be done without asking the child to succeed or finish. At the child care center caregivers should concentrate on the child's individual needs within the group. The program should be more flexible with fewer things which *have to be done*. At the center a child should have the chance to become your friend if she likes. You can be the most important link between the child's home and school life. She will tell you things she would never tell her teacher or parents. In fact a caregiver's job is sometimes more difficult than that of a parent or teacher. You must be able to make yourself totally available to the child in a very open way. You cannot afford to pretend you are not human, too. The child demands honesty. As a caregiver you also have an obligation to give support to the child's family and school. You can be a big help to other adults who are trying to do their best. And all this must be done in a way that does not attempt to reduce or replace parental or teacher influence.

Make School-Age Care Meaningful

School-age care should offer youngsters projects and activities they may not be able to get anywhere else. Children of this age are looking for more than a simple arts and crafts activity. They want long-range projects that may go on for days or weeks. They want an activity they really can get enthused about. They want something that has a lasting purpose for everyone to see. They want an active involvement in the real world of jobs and tasks that need to be done. And in the end they want to be able to say, "We did it by ourselves. We did it our way."

HOW CAN YOU KEEP SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN INTERESTED?

GET THEM INVOLVED AT THEIR OWN PACE

Change The Pace Of After-School Activities

Since you have a better feel for what children this age are like, perhaps you would like some idea of the kinds of things they enjoy doing. When school-age children come to the center they are looking for activities which are different from the kinds they do at school. They will want to feel more like they are home, with time to relax, pick and choose between activities, and spend as much time as they want on a project.

Encourage Activities That Hold Their Attention

By the time children are old enough to go to school, they have developed enough so they can keep their attention on one thing for a long while. And as a caregiver you should encourage activities that require longer and longer attention spans. For example, let them make a birdhouse or build a clubhouse. This kind of training in play helps children in work or study at school. Take advantage of their willingness to tackle difficult tasks. Let them explore the world in greater and greater detail. Simple answers are going to have to become less simple. These children are not as willing to accept things just because that's how things are or were meant to be.

Expect Friendships To Be Important In Play

Friendships are forming at this age. Some of these friendships may be brief, others may go on for years. Perhaps you still keep in touch with someone you went to grade school with or who lived across the street in your neighborhood. Telling jokes and having fun with others are important. Making up secret languages, mysterious passwords and silly songs is great. Children enjoy these and similar activities in large groups, small groups and in pairs.

Be Sensitive To Their Needs To Do Some Things Alone

There will be times when young children will want to be left alone. You do not have to plan these "alone" activities. When a child feels the need to be alone he will be content to go off on his own as long as you are willing to let him. A little daydreaming or talking to himself can't hurt.

Let Them Know That You Recognize Their Abilities

School-age children want to feel capable of doing things, especially grown-up things. They want you to expect them to work carefully so they can take some pride in their accomplishments. The mood of things at the center must be one that can take all these needs into account so the children will feel welcome there.

Give Children Time To Change Pace Without Rushing

Even six to nine year olds have a need for a change of pace. They require time to make changes smoothly and without a lot of fuss. Sometimes, in the morning, a child may still be sleepy. She may simply want to sit quietly by your side, perhaps getting a little bit of special attention. She may also need a similar moment when coming from school later in the day. Perhaps the morning hours before going to school will be a good time for a child to finish some homework, maybe with your help if necessary. It is a time for relaxing after a fast breakfast at home, cleaning up and getting ready for school or for quiet, indoor activities. During vacations and holidays special planning is required to make sure there is enough variety so that the interests and needs of all children can be met.

Provide A Casual After-School Routine

An established routine is a necessary part of the center program. But unlike school, it should be one that is not so hectic and competitive. If you stop to consider all the waking moments in a child's life that he gives to eating, cleaning up, getting dressed and undressed and simply getting ready for the next activity, then you can understand why it is important for a child to learn to enjoy routines. It may be necessary for you to become more organized or less organized than you are used to because the child is looking to you for direction.

Let Them Take An Active Part In Meal And Snack Time

Meals and snacks can be fun if the children are able to help prepare and serve as well as eat the food. This activity gives the children a sense of family or belonging. Pleasant table conversation brings children and caregivers closer together. Cleaning up is part of the experience of eating, too. Children of this age enjoy such tasks because they feel they are able to contribute in an adult-like way.

Give Them A Chance To Rest When They Need It

Even young school-age children will need to rest. Some may actually need to close their eyes and take a short nap. Others will need time to just stretch out for a few minutes to let their bodies calm down after a busy day. They enjoy soft music and low lights, too. Do be careful, however, not to have rest times that last too long. School-age children need frequent but not long rest periods.

Involve Them In Planning And Cleaning Up

Regardless of the activity, do not rush yourself or the children. Use the time spent in any activity as a time to get to know each child a little better. Plan activities so you and the children will have a

sense of enjoyment while the activity is taking place. Let children do as much of the planning as possible - also the setting up of activities and the putting away. There is nothing wrong with making your job easier as long as the children can learn and grow from the activity.

BE CREATIVE IN GUIDING THEIR PLAY

Let Play Be The Main Theme

A child of this age plays and plays and plays. Through play the child explores her talents and discovers things she does best. She also learns things she is not so good at doing. She plays by herself and with others. She plays by the hour because she is a child. A child's world is and should be a world of play.

Expect Wishes, Rhythms And Jokes

Part of a child's play takes on a kind of magical rhythm. He likes counting games, chants and songs that repeat the same nonsense over and over. Making wishes gives him a sense of control. "For my birthday I wish for...." He loves to tell jokes more than he likes to listen to them.

Watch For Monster Stories And Games With Exact Rules

Sometimes school-age children work out their troubles through their games. Childhood fears may be explored in games about ghosts and goblins, monsters and spooks or the good people and the bad. They also like games with exact rules. Six to eight year olds play in smaller groups that are not so definite about who can and who cannot play. Nine to ten year olds play in larger, more definite groups. Group membership - who belongs and who doesn't - is more noticeable in older school-age children.

Create Celebrations For Fun And Learning

School-age children love to celebrate. They will celebrate anything at a moment's notice. Just think of all the things there are to celebrate. There are certainly the usual things such as each child's birthday, holidays, the first day of school (and the last) and many more. But have you ever considered letting the children celebrate Silly Day, Sam-Has-New-Shoes Day or Rainy Day? While children will probably have an opportunity at school to celebrate the change of seasons or St. Patrick's Day, how often do you suppose they will celebrate You-Did-It Day or Backwards Day? Imagine the fun children would have if they could put their clothes on backwards. This is also a time when you can use one of the most wonderful qualities of childhood - the children's imaginations.

Let Celebrations Bring Out New Ideas

Any celebration gives direction and purpose to a child's efforts. Learning takes place without the child even knowing it. And the mood can be so relaxing and fun. Celebrations can be a time for introducing cultural differences. A child can come to appreciate the special qualities, beliefs and customs of children from cultures or families different from his or her own. A What-I-Did-Christmas-Morning celebration in which each child tells of something special the family did Christmas Day can teach children about how families do things differently. It also may teach them that not all people believe in or celebrate Christmas.

Make Any Occasion A Special One

So whatever the occasion, real or imagined, encourage celebration day in your center. It can be something the children have helped plan for days or weeks. Or it can be a total surprise to them. In any event recognize the many values in celebrating.

Let Role-Playing Give Them A Chance To Pretend

Later in this module you will learn how to be a good listener as a way of helping children solve their problems. There is another method that helps children handle their troubles. It is called "role-playing." School-age children just love this activity. They are old enough yet young enough to really get involved. Children love to pretend and be dramatic at the same time. Role-playing gives them that chance.

Let Them Role-Play To Handle Their Feelings

Role-playing is when children act out situations. Sometimes they will make up as well as act out these little skits. They can be silly or serious. They may dress up in old clothes or use props they have made. Role-playing can be of fantasy or real life problems. It is an excellent way to have children deal with their feelings on sensitive subjects like cheating, bullying or divorce without any one child feeling threatened.

Encourage Their Love Of Drama Through Skits

You can read a short story to them and then ask them to prepare a skit or short play. Youngsters this age love to play the parts of people in a real story. The skits can then be followed by asking the children about the feelings and behaviors of the characters. Such play acting and discussion help children understand and accept their own feelings and the behavior of others. The stories or situations may have human characters. Or animals, plants or cars may be the stars. If a story relates to a recent problem or incident that occurred in the center, perhaps using non-human characters such as dogs or trees will be less embarrassing to those

children directly involved. Role-playing can be a good way to get the children talking about and exploring an incident, even if it was not a particularly good one.

Expect To Learn Some Things Yourself

Set aside a time each day for this type of activity. You may be surprised to learn something about yourself as well as the children through role-playing. At first you may feel awkward and not in total control. But that is fine. As time goes by you will feel more comfortable and come to realize that you do not have to be in total control all the time.

Support Children's Enthusiasm For Joining Clubs

The school-age child's keen interest in clubs is something worth noting here. He is more eager to succeed in schoolwork when he has club activities after school hours to look forward to. So emphasis should be given in the child care center to this interest in clubs. Photos and posters advertising center clubs and the activities are helpful to a new child and his parents. It helps make for a more positive introduction and association between the home and center life. Clubs increase a child's sense of belonging, something so very important to the school-age child. Even the child who prefers to spend much of his time by himself enjoys being a member of a club as long as there are enough clubs going on that would appeal to the various interests of children.

Let Them Form Clubs Around Their Interests

There should be athletic clubs, crafts clubs, adventure clubs and special-interest clubs. Athletic clubs for bike riding and repair, body building, hiking, skating or dancing are examples. Arts and crafts clubs such as leather making or woodworking are good. Adventure clubs such as discovery or how-to clubs are fun. A child can discover why the sun is needed to make plants grow or how to make a kite out of newspaper. Special-interest clubs might be a checkers club, camera club or a magic club. The possibilities are endless. All you have to do is ask the children in your care what kinds of clubs they would like to have and let them go to it.

Expect Planning To Be Most Exciting Of All

You may even discover that school-age children are so in love with clubs that the greatest thrill to them is all the planning that goes into forming one rather than the club itself. This is most obvious when children start their exclusive clubs complete with passwords and the like. Once the big preparations of organizing become boring, they are off on another project.

Keep An Eye On Clubs That Exclude

Clubs sometimes result in some children being left out. You will have to decide how far you are willing to let this go. It will differ from situation to situation. Children do need to learn as they grow that not all clubs will want them in the group. When a child first comes to you complaining about being left out, discuss the matter only with him. Find out why he was told he could not join. Hear his side of the story. Talk about the rights of others to choose who they will and will not play with. Explain that you must respect everyone's rights at the center. Suggest he find another activity that interests him. You could help him if he seems unwilling to do that on his own. You probably will want to step in to keep some children from feeling too hurt. Get the group together to talk about how they feel when they are left out. Often the club members decide to let the child join after such a meeting. It also gives everyone a chance to be heard. Maybe the child that has been excluded did not give you the whole story. Whenever children are rejected from club or group activities for racial, cultural or other similar reasons, you will need to stop such behavior right away. Suppose a Jewish child is excluded from a group of children who are decorating their clubhouse with Christmas decorations. "Bobby, you are not allowed in this clubhouse because you don't believe in Christmas." You might say, "It is important for all of us to learn about one another. I bet there are some decorations used to celebrate Hanukkah that would look nice in the clubhouse, too."

Involve Community-Based Clubs In Your Summer Programs

Clubs are very helpful during summer programs. This is when you may find it helpful to familiarize yourself with the various youth activities available to young children within your installation's recreational program. There may be well organized scouting or 4-H clubs. There might be specialized clubs such as the Big Brothers or Sisters. Discuss the subject of clubs with your center director. Then together with the director and other interested parents, teachers and caregivers, get a club program going. Joining can be such fun.

Create Unexpected Fun With Little Surprises

While a child does best when she knows what to expect, this does not mean she objects to an element of surprise. Little surprises can be fun for everyone. Surprises also increase a child's awareness of what is happening. With the child's attention captured you have an ideal chance to create more interest in the event or project at hand.

Time Surprises When Interest Is Low

Of course, surprises should not frighten or embarrass any child. It should be something that adds excitement and enthusiasm. For instance, a field trip, if not too elaborate, sprung on the children can make their day. However, be careful. A surprise may not be welcome by the children if it interferes with some major project or activity which still continues to hold their enthusiasm at a high level. The best time for a surprise is when things have been going slowly and when the youngsters least expect one.

Plan Ahead To Assure Success

Keep a few surprises up your sleeve so you can present one when other plans go badly. Surprises are most effective if they are well planned. Some may require weeks or months of planning. Planning is necessary so you and the other caregivers know exactly what needs to be done when the time seems right for the surprise. Since everyone loves a surprise, use it as a way of adding to your school-age program.

Let Surprises Encourage Imagination

Surprises which encourage the imaginations of children add a nice twist. Frequently, as children grow they are discouraged from using their imaginations. Somehow adults seem to see imaginative play as belonging only to preschool children. Too often adults have the idea that when a child is old enough to go to school, education - learning to read, write and add - is all important. It is forgotten by many that without imagination, achievements in the arts and sciences would be lost.

Use Your Own Imagination As An Example

When there seems to be nothing else to do, ask children to use their imaginations. Have them make up a dance or song, invent a new language or tell tall tales. If they seem shy or embarrassed at first, use your imagination to "break the ice." You have one, you know. It may have been misplaced over the years. But if you look hard enough, you'll find it. A terrific thing about imagination is that it can be used without the aid of toys or props, anyplace and anytime.

Explore Activity-Books If You're Stuck For Ideas

Caregivers at one time or another look for some magical list that will tell them exactly what to do and how to do it. This is especially true when you feel you have exhausted every possible fun thing for the children. It is not the purpose of this module to give you *all* the answers and solutions. Nothing can. You know school-age children like games, songs and jokes. They always enjoy a good story, either one you read to them or one you make

up. They thrive on physical activity so things that involve their entire body are especially good to work out the wiggles and get them more relaxed. There are many good books at libraries which describe appropriate activities for school-age children.

Be Prepared For Boredom

In your search through books in the library do keep this point in mind. There will be times in school-age day care when no matter what you have planned for the day the children will be bored. This is most likely to happen during the long summer vacations. Sometimes children do a great job at creating their own boredom. Likewise, if given time to work through their boredom, they can create their own activities of interest. So do not think that it is always your responsibility to find fun things for them to do. Let them figure out ways to end their boredom. Your only responsiblity during such times is to make available a reasonable selection of creative materials. Even when such items are lacking, children have a marvelous way of creating something from nothing.

BUILDING SKILLS
IN WORKING WITH
SCHOOL-AGE ACTIVITIES

Some Often Asked Questions
And
Situations To Explore

HOW DO YOU HANDLE SCHOOL-AGERS' DISAGREEMENTS?

School-age children love to be a part of a group. They like long, involved projects that can last for days or weeks. They enjoy planning and forming clubs. Secret passwords, meetings and fixing up a clubhouse are all part of the fun with clubs. They like competitive games like kickball, baseball and relay races outside. Inside table games like checkers, chess and cards are fun, too. But these interests can lead to hurt feelings and fierce competition. Clubs often exclude some children so they feel left out or unliked. The desire to win a game can be the only thing that matters. They seem to forget that the main thing is to have fun. So children need the guidance of adults to help them deal with their disagreements.

You can reduce competition by choosing games that do not have winners and losers. Children enjoy working together for the good of all by painting signs or making decorations for an upcoming party. When play gets too rough call a time-out. Have the youngsters discuss the rules of the game. Let them talk about how they feel when someone does not follow the rules. Teach them to solve their own problems. Get them to think about the rights and feelings of others.

WHAT WOULD YOU
DO IF . . .

Carol and Jim, both eight, are playing a game of checkers. Carol is new to the group and Jim has been the champion checkers player. Several children are watching the game. Carol is an excellent player. She wins two games of checkers. Jim throws the checkers down and leaves the table in tears. What can you do to help Jim?

A. Tell Jim that he must learn to be a good loser. Explain that he cannot expect to be "the best" in everything. Ask him to congratulate Carol.

B. Have Carol go over to Jim and ask him to play checkers again. Tell her to let Jim win this time so he won't feel so bad about losing the first two games.

C. Tell Jim you think he is a good player. Encourage him to play checkers with Carol again. Suggest that he watch her moves so he can learn from her.

Answers On Bottom
Of Next Page

Your group of school-age children is playing kickball outside. You see some of the older children knocking down the six and seven year olds. You realize that someone is going to get hurt if something is not done. What action would you take?

A. Go over to the group and stop the game for a moment. Tell the children things are getting too rough and someone might get hurt. Explain that those who continue to play roughly will have to leave the game.

B. Stop the game. Tell the children to go play someplace else. Let them know there will be no more kickball for the rest of the day. Say that maybe tomorrow they can try kickball again.

C. Stop the game. Ask the children who were playing roughly to go sit down and think about their actions. Tell the other children if they play roughly the same thing will happen to them.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best solution. Jim doesn't need to hear he is a loser. Also he will not want to congratulate Carol. He needs a chance to recover from crying and losing the game.

Choice B is not wise. It is unfair to Carol since she is a good player. It is also unfair to Jim who would be more embarrassed if he learned that Carol was letting him win.

Choice C is a good idea. You are letting Jim know he still is a good player. You also are encouraging him to continue to play checkers and learn more moves. Jim and Carol both are helped by this choice.

Leslie is playing a card game, "Go Fish," and refuses to follow the rules. When someone asks her for a card in her hand, she won't give it to them. The other children complain to you. What could you do?

A. Listen to what the children have to say. Then tell Leslie that either she follows the rules of the game or she can't play.

B. Stand by the game and watch. If Leslie doesn't follow the rules, tell her to stop and make her play the game the right way.

C. Encourage the children to tell Leslie what might happen if she doesn't follow the rules of the game. Ask Leslie's opinion, too.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is the best solution because in an active game things can get too rough without children realizing it. Stopping the game and slowing the children down should help. If not, you have let them know what will happen if things get too rough again.

Choice B is not fair because you have given the children no warning about what will happen if they play too roughly. You are not giving them a fair chance to improve.

Choice C is not the best answer because again you are not explaining how you want the children to play the game. The children who have to sit down would be resentful and angry.

Jacob takes pride in being a "good" boy by doing the right thing. He is always telling you about the things other children do that he thinks are not fair. How can you help Jacob?

A. Tell Jacob that you are happy that he is such a "good" boy but he should not tattle on the other children. They won't like him anymore.

B. Tell Jacob that it is true that some people are not very fair. Explain that you do your best to help everyone be fair. However, he needs to accept the fact that sometimes unfair things still happen.

C. Tell Jacob that he is being a tattle-tale and you don't like tattle-tales. Say that he should mind his own business and take care of himself.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A will not help much. You are encouraging tattling by handling the situation yourself instead of helping the other children learn to handle it.

Choice B is not the best choice. It is taking up a lot of your time and not helping Leslie and the other children solve their own problems.

Choice C is the best solution. You are helping the children think of a plan of action to get Leslie to follow the rules. You are having them tell Leslie what might happen if she doesn't. This encourages them to solve the problem themselves rather than always tattling and expecting you to solve it.

Lois, Ruth and Janet are very good friends and tend to exclude other children. Sue wants to play house with them. They tell her she can't play because she isn't in their club. Sue feels bad and you think the three girls are being unfair. What would be most fair to all concerned?

A. Tell the girls they must let Sue play with them. Otherwise they will have to get out of the housekeeping area. Tell them Sue is a nice girl and they shouldn't be mean to her.

B. Explain that there is room for five people in the housekeeping area so anyone who wants to play there can. Say if they want to have a club for just the three of them, they will have to go someplace else.

C. Encourage Sue to play with some other children in the crafts area. Tell her that the three girls are being mean. She should just ignore them by playing elsewhere.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A will not stop the tattling. Jacob really is more interested in your attention. He wants you to notice what a "good" boy he is. He probably doesn't care what the other children think.

Choice B is the best response. You are not calling Jacob a tattle-tale. You are explaining that you are in charge of taking care of the children so he doesn't have to do this.

Choice C is not a wise response. You will hurt Jacob's feelings by scolding him for doing something he feels is helpful. Jacob still will be confused about your reasons.

Jerry and Frank have made up their own secret language. Other children feel left out and are bothered by this secrecy. What would you do?

A. Say, "Boys, I know it's fun to have your own special language, but it is bothering the others. Unless you include them you cannot use your secret language at all."

B. Tell the other children to ignore Jerry and Frank when they use their secret language. Suggest they make up a new language themselves.

C. Say, "Jerry and Frank, you may not use your secret language at the center. If you do, I'll have to call your parents and ask them to talk to you."

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not a good idea. Punishing the three girls by not allowing them to play will make them angry. Then they will take their anger out on Sue.

Choice B is a good way to handle this situation. You are letting the three girls know that if they want to be exclusive and only play with each other, they will have to find someplace else to play since the housekeeping area has room for more than three children. They do not own it.

Choice C is not the best response because Sue is being kept out of the housekeeping area. But it is important to realize that the three girls have a right to choose who they want to play with even if you don't like it.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best response. It is natural for children to have a secret code or language. Telling them that they cannot use the secret language is not realistic and cannot be enforced.

Choice B is the best solution. If no one pays attention to them, they will get bored and give it up or begin to share it with the other children.

Choice C is not good, either. It will only make the boys angry. They probably will use their language even more. Calling their parents over something like this would not be very useful. It is not a good idea to bother parents with such behavior unless it gets out of control.

BE AWARE OF THE WAYS YOU BEHAVE

Recognize How Important You Are To Young Children

Helping children develop a good opinion about themselves is as much a part of your job as a caregiver as it is for the parent or teacher. How a child sees himself is made up of all the beliefs and attitudes he has about himself and which you and others have about him. The picture he paints of himself actually determines who he is, what he thinks, what he does and eventually, what he will become. His self-concept is not inherited. The child is not born with it. It is learned.

Be Aware That You Can Affect A Child's Self-Image

By six a child's self-concept is rather well formed. Yet there are things you should know. Perhaps most important is the fact that a child's image of herself can change. It is possible for just one caregiver to change the child's views about herself in either a good or bad way. Of course, you will want to help the child achieve better feelings about herself.

Always Mention The Positive Things That You See

But change is never easy. Changes in self-concept come about very slowly over a long period of time. You cannot expect results overnight. Getting to the very heart of a child's beliefs about himself is most critical even though they are the hardest to change. Helping a troublemaker to see himself as kind and gentle at times is a big step in creating change. Every experience you have with the child has an effect on his self-image. That is why even little compliments honestly given or simply calling a child by name can help achieve positive feelings about oneself as an individual. You can further help a child by pointing out the things he can do well. Relate his achievements today to those of earlier days. This encourages feelings of being capable and worthwhile. At times you might feel you cannot see any good things to comment on. Even then, try to think of things such as, "You always try your best," "I sure appreciate your being courteous," "You sure got that cleaned up fast" or "I could see you were very angry but you did a good job of controlling your temper." Trying to emphasize the positive is not as easy as you might think. It seems far easier to say things like "Don't do that," "Can't you be nice for once in your life" or "Okay, I've had just about enough of this nonsense."

Encourage Responsibility And Openness

Let school-age children become involved in the actual planning, selection and setting up of their environment and activities. You need not always control them or the events in their lives with an iron hand. Children should be included in discussions about the mood of a room, too. Do not be afraid to sit down with them and freely talk about things such as cooperation and competition, trust and fears and honesty and dishonesty. Accept each child's ideas without judging her or her thoughts. Keep a positive attitude about each child. Let her know you believe she can do it. Be a friend to each child. And be a good listener.

Expect A Child's Self-Image To Affect Interest In Learning

As a child's self-concept grows from bad to good, so goes his learning. Any child who feels he is a valuable human being - not just to others but to himself, too - will naturally learn more easily. He will be encouraged to reach out, to explore, to question and finally to succeed on his own and in a positive way.

Make Establishing Trust A Major Goal

Creating a relationship that includes trust and openness must be a large part of your efforts to improve a child's self-concept. Trusting is a major event in child growth and development - not just trusting in others, but in oneself as well. Since children are often selfish, trust is an important step in the development of a conscience. Thus children must be trusted and respected while they learn to trust and respect others.

Treat Young Children With Respect

A child would describe a trusted, caring adult as a person who sees children in a positive way. The trusted adult is seen by youngsters as one who treats children as worthwhile, friendly people, not as monsters ready to make life difficult. Respected adults allow children an equal say in the making of decisions that will affect them directly. Such adults also have the ability to see things from a child's point of view.

Really Listen To What They Say

It has been suggested that being sensitive to what children say - being a good listener - is a necessary trait that caring adults possess. Trying to make the child think you are listening with an occasional "Okay" or "I guess" will not do. You must *really* listen - not just with your ears but with your mind and heart as well. One thing is certain. Children know when you are faking it. When your mind is off somewhere else, you cannot fool them. If you try you will lose them and they

will stop trying to talk to you. If you truly believe this then you will not find yourself rejected as a disinterested adult.

Listen Without Making Judgments

To be an effective listener you must stop what you are doing. Be calm and sit still. Make eye contact with the child. Put your arm around her or hold her hand. Do whatever makes you and the child most comfortable. The best kind of listener is one who can hear a child out without placing values or judgments on what the child says. You should not give the child solutions to her problems. This is seldom successful. "I told you so" is probably the worst thing you could say. When you do say something to her, simply try to reflect back to the child what it is you think she is trying to say. In this way she stands a better chance of understanding her own feelings. Consider the following example.

Learn This Technique For Talking With Children

"Terry, it sounds like it's been a long day for you."

"I guess."

"School kind of getting you down?"

"That Mr. Foster, he sure is dumb."

"Mr. Foster, is he your teacher?"

"Ya, and he doesn't know what he is talking about. I took the hardest subject for my science report and he told me to do it over again."

"I wonder why he would do that?"

"He says I am not working up to my best. I spent more time on my report than anybody else in the class. Boy, is he ever crazy!"

"You spent a long time on it?"

"Well, it took me a whole week."

"Maybe Mr. Foster does not know how hard the subject was for you. Perhaps he does not know how long you spent on it."

"I might have worked only one or two nights on it, but that was long emough."

Even in this short piece you can see how the child is beginning to better understand and accept himself. He also is learning to deal with his conscience. So the next time a child wants to talk, practice being a good listener.

Try To Be Fair, Helpful And Considerate

By now you know that a school-age child likes an adult who is a good listener, who enjoys being with children and who allows a youngster to make some of her own decisions. But she also likes an adult who is fair, who gives help when needed, who does not get mad all the time and who is happy, kind and considerate. Now you may say, "Well, she doesn't ask for much, does she?" Actually, she doesn't. She probably asks for far less than many adults ask of her.

Avoid Belittling Or Overprotecting Children

To overprotect or belittle a child may make him think there is no way he can gain your approval. When a child begins to have doubts about his abilities and value as an individual, he will show you how he feels through his behavior. He will no longer want to please you by being friendly or helpful. Instead, he will do just the opposite just to be noticed rather than ignored. A child who resorts to less acceptable behavior is a child who feels discouraged.

Let Children Express Their Own Views Freely

Believe in the child's right to her own views. Let her express her views freely. Not pressuring a child to see things your way makes it more likely that she will see things as you do, especially if you are right. Give the child credit for being able to think for herself. Learn to see the child as a unique person who since birth asks nothing more from you than you do from her. Simply stated she asks for understanding, love and acceptance.

SET CLEAR LIMITS AND BE CONSISTENT

Set Reasonable Limits And Offer Encouragement

Encouragement is important in childhood. It gives a child greater confidence. Encourage children to act and think for themselves. Encourage them to try new things. Set reasonable limits that the child can live up to. For instance, do not expect a six year old to sit still without making a sound while you explain the rules to a new game. That would be like asking fish to stop swimming.

Make Sure Your Behavior Sets A Good Example

Learn to be consistent. Children do not trust adults whose behavior they cannot predict. Acceptance of children and their behavior with words is not enough. Caregivers must show acceptance not by word but by deed. "Do as I *say* not as I *do*" does not set a good example for children to follow. A child pays more attention to adult action than adult words. So your example is one of the strongest influences you have in helping a child achieve a more positive self-concept. If you want a child to share, you must be willing to share with the child. If you want a child to be calm, you must be calm, too.

Respect Yourself By Being Consistent With Limits

Respect yourself as well as the child. Caregivers who let school-age children boss adults or generally have their way all the time have little self-respect. In addition, such caregivers have little respect for others. So give children chances to make decisions and choices, but within the limits you must set.

Let Young Children Know What Is Expected

Do not be afraid to set limits, thinking the children will not like you. Everyone needs limits - from the tiny infant to the aging adult. You need to know the speed limit on the road. You need to know what will happen if you are late to work. It would be impossible for anyone to work or play happily without knowing exactly what is expected. We all need and want limits of some kind or another.

Change A Limit If You Need To

When you are able to justify a limit, in your own mind, explain your reasons to the children. If the limit is reasonable it will become clear to you as you talk with the children. You have the right and certainly an obligation to make changes in the limit if you feel that a change is needed. In following these simple steps, you and the children can achieve a better understanding of one another.

Recognize The Importance Of Limits For Development

Even people who work for themselves need some kind of guidelines such as government laws and regulations they must follow. So why should we think children would be any different? They are not. In fact, their needs are greater than an adult's. They do not have the emotional control or the years of experience needed to be in total control of their lives. Rules or limitations are so important to children that when caregivers fail to define them, the children will create their own. Limits not only tell others what is expected of them but they also help children to become more sensitive to the needs of others.

Be Honest In Your Reactions To Children's Behavior

When a child finds a certain behavior of his hurts others, he may put limits on his own behavior. This is surely a sign that the young boy is growing up. Such self-imposed limits are the very best kind. It comes from within the child's own conscience. No one has forced the child to control his actions. You can help by being honest. If he does something which hurts you or offends you, say so. Let him know your true feelings. A child can relate to feelings expressed honestly and openly much more than to fake ones. Covering up your feelings is not good for anyone.

Keep Rules Simple

Avoid giving children long lists of rules or directions. If the children are playing a game, your explanation to be careful will go over much better if you keep it simple. "Now, sometimes this game gets a little rough when you do not follow the rules. So remember, the purpose of a game is for people to have a good time. If someone gets hurt because you did not follow a rule, then the game is no longer fun." Giving a long list of rules such as, "Rule 1: We do not shove in line. Rule 2: We do not make fun of others. Rule 3: We do not talk when others are talking. Rule 4: We do not take our turn out-of-turn. Rule 5: We do not..." and the list goes on and on. You would be wasting your breath. Here again, give the children credit for being able to know for themselves how to play so everyone will have a good time. You only need to stand by and observe, offering guidance as needed.

Help Children Learn To Set Their Own Limits

After an experience is over bring the group together. Discuss the fun things and the not-so-fun things that might have happened. Have the children come up with ways that the project or game could be better the next time around. In this way they will grow by learning and your job will be easier. You will find yourself having to set fewer and fewer limits and the children will be able to set more of their own.

Talk About The Impact Of Different Behaviors

Only in this way can children see the results of their behavior. They learn that everyone is happier when rules are followed. They come to know the good feelings people can have when a good time is shared by others. Also, they discover a new sense of achievement in having been a member of a cooperative group effort. And all this finally leads children to develop abilities to make sound decisions. That is something they can use the rest of their lives.

BE POSITIVE WITH CHILDREN

Saying things in a positive way gets better results and protects a child's self-image, too. For example, rather than saying, "Don't hit him again," you might try, "Keep your hands to your sides." Below each statement write a more positive way of saying the same thing:

1. "If you keep interrupting me you won't get a turn."

2. "I told you you'd have to leave the game if you don't stop tripping others."

3. "If you won't stop teasing no one will like you anymore."

4. "If these tables and chairs aren't put back where they belong this will be the last time I will let you play with them."

5. "All of you stop talking. If I have to warn you one more time we just won't do this."

NOW TURN THE PAGE
AND SEE HOW OUR IDEAS COMPARE WITH YOURS

OUR ANSWERS

1. "If you let me continue working on this then everyone will get a turn sooner."

2. "Please keep your feet out of the way so you can stay in the game."

3. "If you tease others they may choose to play with someone else."

4. "Let's get these tables and chairs put back where they belong so they'll be there when you want to play with them again."

5. "It is important for all of you to listen carefully so you will know how to do this."

Don't Focus On Mistakes And Avoid Comparing Children

You can further encourage feelings of confidence if you downplay a child's mistakes. Bring attention to the things the youngster does right. Avoid comparing one child to another. Always remember that a few days of making a child feel good about herself can go a long way in helping her overcome feelings of failure and unworthiness.

Help Them Develop Their Own Sense Of Fair Play

As a caregiver you should know that being obedient and respecting other children is much more difficult for a child than being obedient and showing respect for you as an adult. Yet active playing or working with others is very necessary to help the child develop a conscience that knows right from wrong, good from bad. This often is called "moral responsibility." Parents, teachers and caregivers should share in helping children develop and accept their moral obligations.

Encourage Consideration For The Feelings Of Others

Just as a child is born to learn self-concept, so is she born to learn how to treat other people. She does not arrive in this life knowing how to be kind, gentle or considerate. She must be taught these things. The older a child becomes the more aware she should be of your needs and the needs of others. If you are always attending to her needs or to your own, the child does not learn how to relate to others. Only when a fair balance is achieved with some of every person's needs being met does the child learn how to give of herself for the enjoyment of all.

Help Them Identify The Things That They Value

You cannot teach values such as kindness, generosity and honesty by telling the child these are important things for him to learn. You can point out your values but you have no right to expect the child to assume your values. You can help the child identify those things which are most important to him so he can make decisions based upon his values. The younger a child is when he learns this process the better he will be at making decisions and accepting moral responsibility.

Let Them Share Their Opinions In A Group

You can help a child define his own set of values by discussing major moral issues. Bring children together and ask them to tell you how they feel about cheating, lying, stealing or fighting. Ask them to talk about things that frighten them. Have them tell you what it means to be different and how

it feels. Ask them to define a friend. These and many other topics, when discussed in a group setting, tell children much about their own values and the values of others.

ENCOURAGE CHOICES AND SUPPORT DIFFERENCES

Encourage All Youngsters To Try Everything

Building a good self-image in a child requires a commitment by caregivers to free the child to become whatever he or she wants to be regardless of sex. Caregivers should refrain from discouraging a child by suggesting any one job is for men or for women only. Your awareness of equal opportunity for boys and girls is an everyday job. It means more than girls playing with trucks and boys with dolls. It is more than *not* saying, "Big boys don't cry" or "Girls are nice as sugar and spice." It is a way of thinking and feeling. It is a true belief that boys and girls can become anything they desire.

Let Interest Not Sex Guide Children's Play

Encourage girls to play baseball with the boys and boys to cook with the girls if they are interested. Recognize the fact that a baseball bat or an egg-beater is not designed to be used by only male or female hands. This kind of freedom does not allow a boy to be loud or messy just because he is a boy or a girl to be quiet or neat because she is a girl. It allows any child to be loud, messy, quiet or neat as the circumstances demand. The child's sex should have nothing to do with it.

Make Children Aware Of Many Possibilities

If a child goes through a stage, such as a girl wanting to wear skirts and dresses and other "girlish" things, go along with her. However, help her by asking her to notice the different styles of clothes worn by women around her. Ask her if she feels these clothes make her a different person than when she wears a shirt and a pair of jeans. Do the same with boys. Discuss why some men prefer their hair short, others like it long. Point out women doctors and male nurses, female jockeys, soldiers and auto mechanics and male cooks, child caregivers and ballet dancers.

Encourage Choice And Support Variety

Since toys are children's tools of play, let them use their imaginations to play one role or another. If a young girl is able to pretend she is a carpenter she stands a better chance of becoming one later in life. Present children with as many choices as possible. Then let them make up their own minds according to their interests and talents, not their sex.

Watch For Language That Shows Prejudice

Be aware of whether you approach boys and girls differently. Are you more abrupt and physical around boys and more quiet and reserved around girls? If so, then you are encouraging a hidden kind of sex prejudice. Watch your choice of words. Try substituting phrases for the word "man." Some examples might be firefighter for fireman, police officer for policeman or postal worker for postman. Use "it" instead of "he" for an animal or "she" for a car or boat. Children learn about themselves from the words they hear. A good self-image develops out of a positive vocabulary. If you want to help boys and girls grow up respecting one another, you must stop using language that encourages sex prejudices.

Respect A Child's Need To Spend Time Alone

A child's ability to develop a positive self-concept requires some time to be alone. A child's need and right to privacy is something that caregivers should not ignore. A child who comes to the child care center before and after school and all day during vacation periods may have a greater need for privacy than a lot of children. While each of us needs and wants to be a part of a group, one can get too much "togetherness."

Expect Individual Differences

Parents, teachers and caregivers frequently worry about a child who seeks out moments and/or places to be alone. Such a child is quickly labeled a loner or he is seen as being bored with life. In reality he may just need some time to himself. A child may be seeking peace and quiet, a few minutes to think or dream without interruption. People have differing needs for privacy. Only when a child seldom plays with others or cannot stand being without someone should there be cause for concern.

BE REALISTIC IN WHAT YOU EXPECT

Help Children Identify Behavior That Leads To Conflict

No matter how hard you try to keep children happy all the time, there are going to be moments of conflict. Life would not be normal if children were never upset, angry or sad. Your task as a caregiver is to help children solve their conflicts. Many times adults make "mountains out of molehills." They overreact. You are most helpful during conflicts if you can identify the behaviors that need attention and those that don't. Also identifying normal from not-so-normal behavior is wise.

Give Them A Chance To Solve Things Themselves

The child care center is a child's world. School-age children want to skip, sing, yell, whistle, run and, yes, fight. Yet many conflicts would be over in a few minutes if adults would not get involved. Give them a chance to solve their own problems.

Be Firm And Gentle And Keep A Good Sense Of Humor

If a child is in conflict with you, perhaps you could suggest she do half of what she wants and half of what you want. Of course, in cases of safety and fairness to others, you will need to handle the child in a firm yet gentle manner. Strong-arm tactics or threats will only make matters worse. If you can keep a positive attitude toward the child through all of this, you will have succeeded in taking a most important step in helping the child resolve her problems. A good sense of humor will help you, too. School-age children like adults who enjoy a good joke and can laugh, especially at themselves.

Speak Positively About Important Adults In Their Lives

Do not speak unfavorably of the child's parents or teacher in front of a child. The child does not need to hear your complaints or criticisms about the other important adults in his life. After all, your opinions are uniquely yours and so are better kept to yourself. If you do make any comments about other people the child likes, keep them positive. This helps build a good self-image in the child. It also strengthens your relationship with the parents, the school and finally the child. If the child sees the important adults in his life in conflict with one another it results in conflicts for him in a very personal way. No child should be asked to deal with that.

Make Each Child Feel Important And Special

Do not forget the importance of *hellos* and *goodbyes* at the center. A caregiver should be at the door to greet every child who arrives. Also, someone should be there to say goodbye as the child leaves. Wish him a good day at school or a safe journey home. Such behavior tells the child that you care. Call him by his first name. Find out if he has a particular name he prefers you to use. The school-age child develops his own perferences and names are no exception. By all means learn how to pronounce both his first and last names correctly.

Let Your Voice And Your Manner Show You Care

The tone of your voice or the expression on your face tells a child if you are really glad to see her. As the child comes and goes use this time to share special moments with her. Ask her what plans she has for the evening or what goodies she has tucked away in her lunch box for lunch at school today. These are the kinds of everyday behavior which reassure a child that you do care.

WHAT DOES YOUR BEHAVIOR SAY TO CHILDREN?

Sometimes it is hard to see ourselves as children see us. It also takes a lot of practice to react in a positive way to their behaviors. However, as you can see, adults who work with young children need to be aware of how their behaviors might affect a child's self-image. The two lists below describe adult attitudes or behaviors. The "A" Column lists some qualities that *discourage* children from developing into trustworthy, respected and caring adults. The "B" Column lists qualities or behaviors that *encourage* children in these areas. Look at both columns carefully. Draw a circle around the items in each list which you think describe you.

Column A	*Column B*
rejecting	showing affection
suspicious	firm (without overpowering)
belittling	consistent
critical	happy
authoritarian	considerate
nagging	patient
overprotective	trusting
discouraging independence	accepting
encouraging extreme conformity	being a good listener
controlling	relaxed
punishing	democratic
unaccepting	fair
rewarding fearful behavior	respecting self and others
lacking a positive self-concept	giving of self freely
rigid	setting a good example*

Now, look at Column A. Note the things you circled. Start today to *eliminate* these behaviors, one by one, from the list. In Column B make note of the things you *did not* circle. Begin to *add* these behaviors one at a time to the list. Make it a habit and see what kinds of changes you are able to make in your own self-concept.

*Adapted from *Responsibility And Morality - Helping Children Become Responsible And Morally Mature*, L. C. Jensen & K. M. Hughston, Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1979, p. 35.

BUILDING SKILLS
IN SUPPORTING
SELF-CONFIDENCE

. . . Some Often Asked Questions
And
Situations To Explore

HOW DO YOU HANDLE SITUATIONS IN A POSTIVE WAY?

While school-age children do not need as much help in meeting their physical needs, they do need help in meeting their social and emotional needs. They need to know that you care for them. They need to know you are willing to listen to what they have to say. By listening you make them feel that what they have to say is worthwhile. To this age group it is very important that you are fair. Be sure that the rules and limits you set apply to all of them. Also, make the list of rules as short, simple and positive as possible. In working with the school-age group you will need patience, cheerfulness and an appreciation of their humor and imagination.

WHAT WOULD YOU
DO IF . . .

Juan is playing in the housekeeping area. He is rocking a doll. Some of the other boys begin to tease him about being a sissy and a girl-lover. Juan is upset and doesn't know what to do. What do you say?

A. "Juan, it's okay to play with dolls. Don't pay any attention to the other boys." Then ask the other boys to leave Juan alone.

B. "Juan, while it's okay to play with dolls, it's better for boys to play with other things. Why don't you play with the other boys over there?"

C. "You know, boys, dads rock babies so it is okay for boys to play in the housekeeping area. Anyone can play in all areas of the center because there are no all-boy or all-girl areas here."

Answers On Bottom
Of Next Page

Anna is angry because you will not allow her to run through the block area. She yells, "You are dumb. You can't tell me what to do." How would you respond? Say:

A. "Anna, I don't have to listen to that kind of talk. Now go sit in the time-out chair until you are ready to say you are sorry."

B. "Anna, I know you are mad at me, but in this center everyone follows the rules. That includes you."

C. "Anna, if you don't obey me, I'm going to call your parents. What I say goes in this center. Don't forget it."

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best response. It does not help Juan to feel better or to deal with the other boys' ideas of what boys should do.

Choice B is not good. It makes Juan feel that it probably is wrong for boys to play in the housekeeping area.

Choice C is the best solution. It helps everyone to see that rocking dolls is practice for being a father. It also gives you a chance to let the children know that there are no all-boy or all-girl areas at the center.

Another staff member is talking with a group of children about what they can do next. He says, "You can go outside and play in the rain. Or you can stay inside where it's dry and play with all the new toys we have. If you decide to go outside you will have to stay out. No running back and forth because you are cold and wet." Is there a better way to handle this situation?

A. Yes. When you want to give children a choice, you should not make one choice seem better than another. The staff member is not giving a choice but only making it seem that way.

B. No. If it seems best that the children stay in, then you should make that seem the best choice for the children to make. Sometimes children need help in making choices.

C. Yes. Give the children more choices than just those two and then allow them to do whatever they choose to do. Limiting choices limits learning.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is a poor choice. You are setting up a power struggle. Anna may not go sit in the time-out chair. Then you are forced to make her go. Even if she does sit in the chair, she certainly won't be sincere in saying she's sorry if she is willing to say it at all.

Choice B is the best idea. You are telling Anna you know she is mad at you. But you still expect her to follow the rules. She is trying to involve you in a power struggle. Be firm but calm.

Choice C is not the best response. You are being weak. By threatening to call her parents, she knows you can't handle her. She will continue to challenge you.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is best. In this situation the staff member really was not giving the children a choice and this was not fair to them. If he really felt the children should stay in, he should not have offered it as a choice.

Choice B is not true decision making. While children may need help in making a decision, they will not learn to do so by being coaxed into the caregiver's choice. If you want children to learn to make decisions give them a real set of choices from which to choose.

Choice C will not work. If children have too many choices they will not be able to make any decision. When first helping children to make decisions, it is best to limit the choices to two or three.

BE SENSITIVE TO AND ACCEPT FEELINGS

Recognize That Many Feelings Are New

School-age care can do a great deal to help a child handle his feelings. Many behaviors occur because the youngster is struggling with difficult situations or sensitive moments in growing up. Many of these feelings confuse, frustrate or frighten him.

Encourage Growth By Showing Concern

As a caregiver, give a child tasks that she is willing to accept. Recognize her right and need for greater independence. Support her in her efforts to grow up. Encourage self-confidence. Remember, sometimes all it takes is one caring adult to help a child handle her doubts or fears.

Let Them Know That Fear Is Normal

Some feelings of fear are useful and necessary. Let the school-age child know this. Since the adult world all too often admires courageous, brave acts, a child gets the idea that fear is bad. A young child may do crazy, dangerous things trying to prove he is not afraid. So encourage a child to accept his fear as normal. Relate grown-up fears to him so he knows everyone has fears. Show how fear can be helpful in some cases yet not so helpful in others. Since fears are learned, a caregiver has control over many situations that cause fear in a child. You have the experience to overcome many of your fears. The child does not. You can and should pass on these experiences to the child.

Listen To Their Worries And Take Them Seriously

Worries are fears of what a child thinks will happen. Sometimes a child worries about things for a good reason. If she was once bitten by a dog, she may be afraid of dogs. But such a fear can become so strong that she is never able to be near any animal without being overwhelmed with fear. This is not good for her. Your love and understanding can lessen the fear. The child should not be scolded or teased. Do not think the fear will pass on its own as the child grows. Some fears can and do have long-lasting results. So your help is needed.

Be Aware Of The Kinds Of Things They Fear

The school-age child fears many different kinds of things. He may fear a parent's sudden illness or long-term military service away from home. Separation is just as real a threat to the school-age child as it is to a younger child. The older he gets the more he is aware of the many things that can occur in everyday life. An auto accident can cause injury and a long stay in the hospital.

Whatever it may be, he is all too aware of what can happen sometimes without warning. Be sensitive to his growing concerns. Be there to offer advice, give a hug or simply listen.

Be Sensitive To Fears Of The Unfamiliar

Moving can cause fear in a child. She may have a hard time leaving one home and school in which she feels comfortable and accepted. Leaving close friends, teachers and familiar neighbors is not always easy for her. She may imagine the worst about the new place. Starting all over again is a very real fear for her.

Find Ways To Help Children Feel Comfortable

As a caregiver you can help the child make a smooth, happy move. Give him a little more attention at first. Watch to see that he is accepted by the group. It is important that he finds the center a friendly, exciting place to be. Find out what kinds of things interest him. Show him some of the activities the other children are doing which he would like. By taking a few, simple steps you can make the move easier.

Be Aware Of The Fear Of Not Being Liked

The school-age child fears not being popular. The outgoing child will have no problems making new friends. However, the shy, timid child often does. She should not be pushed into friendships. In group care you can best help her by being a friend yourself. Once she feels at ease with you she is more likely to look around for friendship from others.

Teach About Friendship By Being A Friend

This may take time and patience on your part. Yet there is no other way to help a child overcome his shyness. Once he is sure he is liked by you he is secure enough to reach out for others. Sometimes instead of being shy a child may turn to being a show-off. This child has the same insecure feelings as the shy child. The same approach is advised here, too. Show the child you like and accept him. Gradually his need to show off will disappear.

Note That Going To School Can Be Scary

School itself can frighten a child. Most everyone knows the fear and excitement of the beginning of school for the first grader. But some doubts about starting any new year of school with a new teacher, classroom and friends worries most every child. Stories are heard about how mean a particular teacher is or how hard the work is in the next grade. So a child develops fears. Recognize how important it is when a child goes to school. Take an active interest in what she tells you when she comes to the center. Be a good listener. Give her

a chance to talk about how she feels about school and what goes on there.

Be Sensitive To The Effects Of Competition

A child may fear competition in school. There is competition between boys and girls, among boys and girls, between classrooms, schools, families, cities and nations. It never stops. A child can take only so much of this before his very right to be who he wants to be is taken from him.

Find Ways To Reduce That Need To Compete

As a caregiver in the child care center you can do your part to help reduce the child's fear of competition. Do not encourage the playing of organized games and sports that produce winners and losers. The child gets enough of that outside the center. Instead, get the child into projects which do something besides make her feel competitve. Allow a child to just play for the sake of playing. Give her a chance to do something for the fun of doing it. There is nothing wrong with that.

Make Having Fun The Main Point Of The Game

This does not mean never allowing relay races or baseball games. But it does mean keeping such activities to a minimum. Even some typical team sports can be changed so they are less competitive. Baseball can be played without teams. Batters, pitchers and fielders can be rotated so everyone has a chance. When the batter finishes batting he becomes the pitcher. The pitcher becomes the first baseman, the first baseman the right outfielder and so on. Balls are thrown, hit and caught for the fun of it. No one keeps score. When you cannot avoid competition, stress competition with *self*. Encourage a child to keep track of how, with practice, he is able to catch more flies or hit more pitches than the last time.

Avoid Creating Losers When There Are None

Make it easy for a child to enter and leave activities. Then she does not feel like a loser if she takes time out to rest because she is tired or moves to something else because she is bored. Not every child is as interested in winning and losing as are many adults. As a caregiver you need to know that. Sometimes a child just wants to go through life making herself and others happy. She does not care one way or the other who wins or who loses. In the end she just wants to be herself.

Help Them Learn To Appreciate Differences

The early school years are important in the development of racial and cultural attitudes in a child. He has many concerns about how he and his family compare to others. He worries about whether other children think he is good enough to be accepted by them. The child should feel pride in his own race and in his family. He must also learn to appreciate those races and cultures which are different from his own.

Be Sensitive To Their Attitudes

As she grows the child becomes more aware of how her family's life-style differs from others. Sometimes she feels she is not as good as others. Or she might think she is far better than everyone else. In either case the child does not have a healthy attitude. As a result she behaves in ways that do not respect her and her family or others and their families.

Take Time To Understand Cultural Values

Before children can respect cultural differences you must understand how these differences can affect behavior. For instance not all cultures place as much emphasis on children handling their own problems. French children are not taught to fight their own battles. Adults are expected to step in when children begin to quarrel or fight. An American child is encouraged by his family and friends to stand up for his own rights without outside help. When basic cultural differences of these kinds occur they require careful responses from you.

Check Your Own Attitude About Differences

Nobody wants to show favor to one child or group of children over another. But it does happen. Watch yourself and correct any of your behavior that shows your preferences. If you find yourself giving a child more praise and attention, ask yourself these questions. Do I like this child more than the others? If so, why? Is it because I approve of the family, the way the child dresses or combs his hair? Do I have basically negative feelings about all Mexican-American or Native American children? Do I have the right to make a child feel inferior? What do my attitudes say to others?

Let Children Enjoy Other Languages

Group discussions are excellent. Children gain a better understanding of cultural differences. They are better able to accept themselves and others. Group projects that consider cultural differences are possible, too. Sometimes the language spoken

in one family can make a child feel different. Try writing the months and days of the week on the calendar in that child's language for all to learn. Children of this age truly enjoy learning to speak another language. Perhaps the secret password into a club could be translated into the language. In any event these kinds of experiences make children more accepting of one another.

ENCOURAGE A SENSE OF PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Help Them Understand Their Bodies

Many children worry about their bodies and their overall health and safety. Extreme concern (or lack of it) about cleanliness is part of this, too. They become excited about losing baby teeth and getting new ones. They become concerned about body changes as they approach the teen years. So it is important to talk with children about proper care of their hands and faces, brushing their teeth and hair, and keeping their clothes and bodies clean in general. Discussions about regular dental and medical check-ups is important. Sometimes children are embarrassed about being too tall or too short, or too fat or thin. Children need to understand and appreciate the differences among them. They need to be assured that these differences are normal.

Let Them Know That Their Feelings Are Normal

As a caregiver you must help youngsters see that their feelings and wishes regarding sex are normal, too. They should know that all children have these feelings. Some children's bodies mature at a very young age. With rapid growth come sexual feelings they have never known before. For youngsters these feelings can be rather scary. Let them talk about what is happening. When children no longer think they are different, their fears are lessened. They are better able to accept their bodily changes.

Encourage Good Health Habits

Encourage good health habits such as regular exercise, eating the right kinds of food, covering mouths when coughing or using a tissue for blowing noses. For proper physical growth children of this age need a wide variety of physical activity. They need different kinds of spaces and equipment. Long periods of sitting - like in front of the TV - prevent body fitness. Many schools have reduced rather than increased the amount of time given to exercise. So the child care center must try to fill the gap by allowing a lot of physical movement.

Often children can avoid problems of being over or underweight when physical exercise is a regular part of the day.

Offer Them Guidance Without Criticism

Offer youngsters guidance about dress and grooming. But be careful not to criticize their tastes in clothes, hairstyles and similar personal preferences. Relate good nutrition to healthy hair, skin and teeth. Encourage the eating of three meals a day - starting with a good breakfast each morning. Nutritious snacks are important, too.

Keep An Eye Open For Health Problems

Notice children for signs of being tired or run-down. This is most important in children who are recovering from an illness as they tend to overdo. Explain to them the need to take care of themselves by wearing enough clothes to keep warm, resting when they are tired or slowing down to prevent accidents.

Be Available When They Are Concerned About Health

Generally, school-agers are a healthy group. But this also is the age they will come down with the usual childhood diseases. Chicken pox, measles and mumps are some. Stuffy noses and sore throats are common, too. Tell them you are concerned about their health. Encourage them to come to you if they have a headache or feel sick to their stomachs. Let children know you are willing to discuss anything that worries them about their changing and growing bodies.

Prevent Accidents By Stressing Safety Rules

Many youngsters try to do a little more than they should. This means more cuts and bruises, bumps on the heads or accidents in general. To reduce the number of such accidents, stress the need to follow rules. When they play with large equipment like bikes or play very active games like basketball or tag, you will have to stop children from doing things which are dangerous.

Encourage Responsibility For Their Own Well-Being

Have group projects about health and safety. Let the children run a safety check on every area in the child care center. They will enjoy looking for loose electrical cords, broken doorknobs or fire hazards. Have different youngsters on health duty. Each day or week certain children are to check for water spilled on the bathroom floor, empty paper towel holders and other similar things. Such activities help children learn to be responsible for their own well-being.

RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF SPECIAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Some children are so concerned about their physical development that it can affect how they behave. And their behavior may be one clue to the source of a problem they may be having with their vision, hearing or speech. In the categories below watch for children who:

VISION

____ squint or frown when using their eyes.

____ hold books very close to their eyes.

____ sit too close to the television.

____ blink or rub their eyes often.

____ complain of eye or headaches, especially after using their eyes.

____ complain of not being able to see things clearly.

HEARING

____ do not answer questions.

____ constantly do not understand or follow directions.

____ need to watch your mouth when you are talking.

____ frequently have earaches or runny noses.

____ talk in a loud voice without changing tone from word to word.

____ complain of not being able to hear.

SPEECH

____ speak so others cannot hear.

____ mispronounce or leave out certain sounds or words.

____ speak very slowly.

____ speak with a nasal, muffled, hoarse or whiney voice.

____ stutter.

BE AWARE OF CHILDREN'S FEELINGS ABOUT DIVORCE

Understand The Loss That Most Children Feel

One of the most sensitive subjects that can face a child is divorce. Divorce affects each child in a different way. No two divorces are ever the same. A divorce means a loss to the child. She feels a loss of love and security. The scary thing about it is that she has no control over the problem. When she feels helpless her fears and worries are at an all time high.

Reassure The Child Who Feels Guilty

A child may feel guilty. He may believe he is the one who has caused his parents' unhappiness. What an awful burden for any young child to bear. As a caregiver you can reassure a child that he did not cause the divorce. Point out times when both his parents were unhappy with him. Perhaps he told a lie or got into a fight at the center. Both parents were concerned about him. A divorce did not happen then.

Be Sensitive To Changes In Behavior

When a child learns that her parents want to divorce she usually is against it. She wants her family to stay together. She may not show any obvious signs of distress. But watch her behavior very closely. She may be ill much more than before. She may have to assume greater responsibilities at home. The child always feels rejected by one or both parents. Some parents try to make up for this by letting a child do whatever she wants. Discipline goes out of her life. She has a hard time believing anyone cares about her anymore.

Be Sure That Discussions Don't Hurt Feelings

As you discuss divorce with the child keep in mind the fact that your words may not have the same meaning to the child. Adults often assume that the child understands when he really does not. So do not suggest that his parents do not love one another anymore. Just say that they have decided not to live together. Any suggestion by you that love is being taken away is a threat to the child. This is true no matter how old the child may be. Even older children who have friends whose parents are divorced think divorce is something that happens only to others. The idea you want to get across is that the parents are *no longer married* rather than *no longer loving.*

Be Patient If They Need Some Special Attention

At the time of the divorce expect the child to try your patience. This is when she needs the closeness of people who care. It may mean that the usual ways of disciplining will have to be ignored for the time being. She is very sensitive to any feelings of rejection from anyone - her friends, teacher and you. It is necessary that other caregivers know the child is going through a divorce. They should give the child moments of happy smiles and cheerful greetings. Such attention goes a long way in helping a child through this difficult time in her life.

Let Your Own Experiences Guide You

If you were a child of divorce, take a look at your own feelings. If you are mature enough to be able to discuss your experiences without finding fault, then this will be very meaningful to the child. Any attempts that help a child accept divorce make for a happier child. A child who can live at peace with divorce is a child who has learned and gained a great deal.

Help Them Understand They Are Not Alone

Often other children will tease a child whose parents are divorced. Once more showing your love and affection is important. Your support to make a child feel secure can do much to reduce the effects of any remarks. Point out other children and families that are divorced. Bring children together to discuss this matter. Many children have gone through divorce so there are others with a common experience. Provide a mood in which the children feel free to talk. Sharing thoughts and feelings always helps. A child does not feel so alone. He does not feel different from all the others.

Recognize How Hard It May Be To Accept Divorce

The dating and/or remarriage of one or both parents is a very special problem. Most every child of divorce lives each day counting on her parents getting back together again. Dating is a threat to that belief. Remarriage is the final loss of all hope. The child should be encouraged to discuss her thoughts in this area openly with adults. You need to explain that parents rarely get back together, especially after the divorce is final. Dating and remarriage make a child feel her place in the family is no longer important. She feels a loss of attention and love. If nothing else she should be made to understand that divorce usually is final.

Give Your Support To Both Parents

Since your job requires a good relationship with the entire family, you must be able to give your support to both parents as well as the child. Attitudes that suggest the parents no longer care are both unfair and not true. Do not allow yourself to show any favoritism. All too often sides are taken in a divorce. The child gets enough of that conflict at home. Relatives on both sides of the family want to have their say. You must be sure to speak kindly and fairly about both parents. No matter what your true feelings may be about a parent or divorce in general, this is one time when honesty is not the best policy. You certainly do not know all the facts and have no right to form an opinion. So your thoughts are best kept to yourself. Your main concern should be the welfare of the child.

BE PREPARED TO HANDLE THE SUBJECT OF DEATH

Recognize That Fears Not Discussed Grow

Perhaps the greatest fear of all - for children and adults alike -- is the fear of death. Adults seldom want to talk about death with children. But just like any other fear, when it is not discussed it grows bigger and bigger in their minds.

Be Aware That They Can Understand Physical Death

Younger school-age children are able to understand the meaning of physical death. At this age they do not deny or accept it. They just see death as something that happens only to others. Older school-age children are able to form realistic ideas about death. They know all people die - even children.

Expect Curiosity About Death

A child usually is quite curious about death. If she finds a dead frog in the play yard she may wonder why it has stopped jumping. The school-age child has many questions. She wants to know what makes something dead. She wants to know if you can see death and what it looks like. She always wonders where dead people go, who are their friends and what do they eat for breakfast. She wonders if dying means staying dead. She wants to know how death can be stopped. She may think only bad people die. She wants to know if dead people hear and see everything she says and does. She wonders if people who have died want to be alive again or are they happy being dead.

Discuss It Only If You Are Comfortable With The Subject

If you can answer the child's questions honestly you can prepare her to accept death as a natural part of life. This will develop healthier attitudes about death and help the child meet the future with more confidence. Do not suggest that her puppy is in animal heaven or that God will take care of her brother. Not all people believe in heaven and God. You do not have the right to expect them to. By all means do not begin and try to carry on a discussion about death if you are not comfortable with the subject. You will not be meeting the child's need at that moment by trying to pretend to be the mature, all-knowing caregiver.

Answer Only Those Questions Asked

While a parent or a close family member should be the one to explain death to a child, you may have to deal with this problem yourself. You may be the child's closest adult friend. Do not offer more information than the child is seeking. If asked "What is death?" calmly say that a person does not breathe or talk anymore. The body is still, quiet and peaceful. Do not relate death with sickness. This makes a child afraid of illness in himself as well as others. Never tell a child something that will have to be unlearned later. If you do not know the answer to a question say "I don't know." If you are in doubt about what the child wants to know, then ask "What is it you want to know?"

Remember, There Is No One Best Answer

There is no one best answer to the mystery of death. People differ in their beliefs about and reactions to death more than to any other event. There is no magic way that will comfort all people either at the time of a death or in the period that follows. You can help reduce a child's suffering if you explain that there is no pain or hurt for the person who has died. Get the child to say the word *dead* or *die*. Have him really say it. Let him know it is all right to miss someone, to feel sorry, angry or guilty or to cry. The worst possible thing is for the child to hold back tears.

Let Them Express Whatever They Feel

Do not ask the child to show sorrow that is not felt. To ask a child to cry, get mad or feel sad may be asking her to behave in a way she does not feel or understand. If she does not feel like crying then do not make her feel guilty. Otherwise she may think there is something wrong with her. She may feel that she loved the dead person less because she cannot cry or does not feel like crying.

Encourage Them To Remember The Good Things

Encourage a child to remember the good things about a person even if that makes him cry. Point out that nothing he ever did made the dead person die. Show how just the opposite was true. Talk about the happiness that he added to the dead person's life. Even if he remembers times when he did not treat the dead person nicely, offer comfort. Let him know that all people are like that. Reassure him that the loved one understood and that the dead person still loved him.

Talk With A Child's Family About The Experience

Listen and encourage a child to talk about what she thinks and how she feels. In this way her questions and fears will be reduced. Talk about the anger and the hurt. Encourage a child to tell you some of the things that are troubling her. Let her know that you do not have all the answers. Tell her you, too, are still trying to find the answers to death. Discuss the funeral and the cemetery, if this is part of the child's death experience. Find out all the necessary facts that you can from the child's family. You need to know what her experience has been with the death before you can begin to help her.

Let Children Express Their Ideas And Feelings

Some children may not want to express themselves when the pain of death is so real. In their confusion or anger they might refuse to talk about it. Other children may just be waiting for the chance to talk. Let children express their ideas and feelings. Do not try to change their opinions. A discussion should simply help each child sort out his own thoughts and feelings.

Recognize The Concern Caused By A Parent's Death

The hardest death for a child to deal with is the death of a parent. Not only must he face the many questions he will have, but he is also most concerned about who will take care of him. The death of a brother or sister or a close friend makes it even more real that death can happen to him. Guilt sets in as he remembers fights, arguments and mean things that he has said and done. Even the death of a pet can have the same results.

Do Not Pity Or Avoid The Child Experiencing Death

When a child returns to the center after the death of a loved one, do not show *too much* sympathy. That is as bad as never bringing up the subject. When too much attention is brought to the death the child fails to get involved in much else. When no mention is made of the death as if it never happened, the child feels she is all alone and no one cares. Either situation can easily drive a child to develop undesirable behavior.

Give The Child Time To Readjust To Routine

It usually is best to wait a reasonable time before any long talk takes place. Allow the child to return to her normal routine at her own pace. Offer encouragement as needed. It is important to help the child overcome her grief by giving her something meaningful to do as soon as she is ready. Maybe singing a song or reading a poem about the loss of a loved one would be good. Time is her and your best friend. Patience on your part can do much to increase the child's desire to make a good adjustment. It is always good to show a child that she is not alone in her feelings. If the child knows that others have had similar feelings and thoughts, it may help her feel that she is not alone.

UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN FEELINGS AND RESPECT THEIRS

Expect Fear To Be Expressed In Many Ways

The school-age child will try to handle his fears in one of several ways. He may deny the fear exists. Denial requires so much of his energies that he often cannot do much to help himself get over being afraid. A child may try running away. He could run away physically from home. But most often he just avoids thinking about his fears. Sometimes a child will attack others in an effort to express his frustration. A child often pretends to be sick because he fears something. Such fear in a child can cause a real illness if it is not identified and brought into the open. Another child may refuse to grow up. He may act younger than his age. Still another child will do anything you or his friends ask just so he can be accepted. He never learns to think for himself. This can be as bad as the child who never does what others ask.

Encourage Questions And Answer Honestly

However a child chooses to express her fears there are some things you can do. Encourage questions. Then give honest answers. A child is usually less afraid when she knows the facts. On some sensitive issues such as sexual development or family divorce, you may need permission from the child's parents. But do discuss disturbing events with the child. Even if you just listen and she does all the talking, that's fine. When a child relates her concerns to you, sometimes being able to hear herself talk can ease the confusion.

Look For The Cause Of The Fear

Do not make a child experience the fear again and again. While this may work in some cases, it doesn't in all. The child should be relieved of the fear from the first scare before he is asked to handle another. Look for the cause of the fear. Sometimes this is easy. Sometimes it is not. Whatever the case do not press the issue too much. You might only increase the child's fear and lose his friendship.

Be Sure That You Are Comfortable With It

Take a look at your own feelings. If you are still uncomfortable with some of the fears a child expresses, perhaps you are not the best person for the child to turn to. Another caregiver, a nurse or a good book might do the job better.

Get To Know The Child

Get to know the child. The better you know her the more easily you can spot moments of fear or worry. Finally, know that fears are a normal part of living for all children. Children cannot go through life completely without fears. Your job is to help them grow without being burdened by their fears so they can become happy, healthy young adults.

BUILDING SKILLS IN SUPPORTING SCHOOL-AGERS' SENSE OF WELL-BEING

. . . Some Often Asked Questions
And
Situations To Explore

HOW CAN YOU HELP SCHOOL-AGERS ACCEPT AND UNDERSTAND THEIR FEELINGS?

School-age children have fears and feelings of frustration, anger and sadness. They want very much to have a whole family, a group of friends and special adults who accept them. They need to have someone who will listen to them. They need others who will explain things to them and help them work through their problems. Understanding and accepting are the key words. Their world has now expanded to include home, center and school. They need help in dealing with each of these places. When they have problems in school they seem to have problems at home and in the center. One problem now follows them wherever they go. You cannot make things right all the time. But you can offer a listening ear, a warm smile and an encouraging pat on the back or joyful hug that will help them handle their problems.

WHAT WOULD YOU
DO IF . . .

Rebecca comes to the center everyday before school. Lately just before it is time to go to school, she says she doesn't feel well. When she is allowed to stay at the center or go home she seems fine for the rest of the day. You are concerned that there is something wrong. What could you do?

A. Tell Rebecca's parents that she has a problem and they should talk with her teacher in order to find out what's wrong.

B. Say, "Rebecca, if you don't go to school you'll fail. I know you are all right. I don't like it when you pretend to be sick."

C. Talk with Rebecca and see if you can find out what is bothering her. Encourage her parents to talk with her also. Share what all of you know and see if you can help Rebecca.

Answers On Bottom
Of Next Page

Clinton tells you that nobody likes him and that he has no one to play with. You have noticed that he is left out of activities and is the last one chosen in a game. How can you help him?

A. Try to find out what Clinton does well and what things interest him. Encourage him in these activities. Have him help another child who would like some help.

B. Choose Clinton to be your main helper at the center. Let the other children know what a good helper Clinton is and say you wish they would all be as helpful.

C. Tell Clinton that in order to be popular, he must go over to where the children are playing and join in. Explain that when he can play games better he will be chosen more often.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best response because you, as the caregiver, might be able to learn what's bothering her more easily than the teacher. The teacher may not know that there is a problem. If you and Rebecca's parents find the problem, then you can help her deal with it.

Choice B will only make matters worse. It will scare Rebecca rather than help her.

Choice C is a good idea. You show that you care and understand. It may be something that can be taken care of without involving the school. If not, then a talk with the teacher could be helpful. The key is to not blame anyone. Find out what the problem is so you can help Rebecca.

Patty has been acting withdrawn and unhappy lately. She cries easily and seems overly sensitive. You are told by another staff member that Patty's parents are divorcing. You would like to talk to Patty's parents about this. How could you handle this situation?

A. Ask Patty if she knows why her parents are divorcing. Tell her that you will help by having a talk with her parents.

B. Talk with the parents about Patty's change in behavior. Ask if they have noticed anything at home. Tell them Patty has not mentioned the divorce.

C. Talk with Patty's parents and tell them that Patty seems very unhappy about the divorce. Tell them to be very understanding and loving with Patty so she will not be permanently affected.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is the best. You are helping Clinton develop his abilities and interests. He is encouraged to help another child who may need some help, too. Gradually Clinton will grow in self-confidence. Other children will begin to notice him, too, and this will help Clinton to be better accepted by them.

Choice B is not wise. You are making Clinton your favorite child. The other children will resent it. It will make matters worse, not better. The children will refuse to play with Clinton to get back at you.

Choice C is not at all helpful. You are pushing Clinton into situations where he will probably be rejected. You are also telling him that he does not play well enough to be accepted. That will do nothing for his self-confidence.

Eddie has a pet guinea pig that he loves very much and talks about all the time. One morning he comes in very upset. His mother tells you his guinea pigs was dead in the cage when Eddie woke up. How can you help Eddie?

A. Tell Eddie you know he feels very sad about his pet's death. Say that death is just like going to sleep and never waking up. Reassure Eddie that his guinea pig is not in pain.

B. Tell Eddie not to feel too bad because his parents probably will buy him a new guinea pig very soon. Then everything will be fine.

C. Tell Eddie you are very sorry about his pet. Let him know you understand how he feels. Ask him if he would like to talk to you or the other children about his guinea pig.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is a poor choice. Patty's problem will not be helped when you ask her why her parents are divorcing. She is hurting inside and needs your understanding, not your questions.

Choice B is the best way to proceed. You are not putting Patty's parents on the spot. You are telling them about Patty's behavior and expressing a concern. Her parents probably will tell you about the divorce and together you can work out a way to help Patty.

Choice C is not the best response. You are making Patty's parents feel guilty. You are putting all the responsibility for Patty's behavior on the parents. This will not help either Patty or her parents.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is unacceptable. Telling Eddie that dying is like going to sleep could scare him. He could think that when he goes to sleep he might never wake up.

Choice B is not any better. You are denying Eddie's right to feel sad. He is not ready to think about replacing his pet yet. You need to help him deal with his feelings.

Choice C is by far the best of the three solutions. You are letting Eddie know you understand his sadness and are willing to talk with him about it. Having him share his feelings with you and the other children may help relieve his pain.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN TAKE GOOD CARE OF THEMSELVES?

School-age children need to learn good health habits such as dressing properly for the weather, cleanliness and the importance of enough sleep and good food. You can help them learn these things by having discussions and learning activities. These activities could include health checklists for them to fill out and weather charts to keep track of the temperature outside. Discuss safety when playing, walking to school and bike riding. Be alert for signs of illness. Watch for listlessness, crying or unusual displays of bad temper. This age group tends to push itself too hard. So plan some quiet activities during the day. Be aware of common problems so you can stop them before they get started.

WHAT WOULD YOU
DO IF . . .

When the children go outside on cold days parents usually insist they wear coats. Louis always starts out with his coat on at the center. But often after being out for a while, you notice he has taken his coat off. What would you do?

A. Tell Louis that if he takes his coat off he may get chilled. Then talk to his parents. If they want him to wear a coat, then tell Louis he either wears his coat or else plays inside.

B. Allow Louis to remove his coat because he may be overheated. If he is too warm he doesn't need his coat. When he gets cold, he will put it back on.

C. Tell Louis you are going to talk to his parents about not wearing his coat. Remind him that they bought him his nice warm coat so he would be warm.

Answers On Bottom
Of Next Page

Lance comes in from school everyday with muddy shoes. You know he has been jumping in mud puddles. While this is fun for Lance, it is hard on shoes and socks. How do you handle this situation?

A. Make Lance wear his muddy, wet shoes and socks until they are dry. This will be so uncomfortable that he will stop jumping in mud puddles.

B. Explain that water and mud ruin shoes. Let him know each time he gets wet and muddy he will have to take his shoes and socks off and sit in a chair until they dry. Suggest he wear boots.

C. Have Lance take his shoes and socks off when he gets back to the center, but don't punish him. Jumping in puddles is perfectly normal so don't make a big deal about it. Boys will be boys.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is the best response. You are explaining what could happen if Louis takes his coat off. You are letting him know what will happen if he takes his coat off again. Also, you are respecting parents' wishes as well.

Choice B is not so wise. By the time Louis realizes that he is cold, he probably will be quite chilled.

Choice C is a poor solution. You are not giving Louis the responsibility for keeping his coat on. Also, you have not honored the parents' wishes.

Maria has been coming to the center after school for about six days very, very tired. She sits at the table and puts her head down. Several days she has fallen asleep. You are most concerned. What do you do?

A. Encourage Maria to go to bed earlier at night. Then she will not fall asleep at the center.

B. Leave Maria alone because she probably is not feeling too well. She will get over her sleepiness when she feels better.

C. You should talk with Maria's parents and ask them if they have noticed her tiredness.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is unwise. Lance will have cold feet wearing wet, muddy shoes and socks until they are dry. He also will track mud all over the center.

Choice B is a good choice. You are making Lance responsible for his actions. No muddy shoes - he gets to play. Muddy shoes - he has to sit and wait for them to dry.

Choice C will not help. Lance needs to learn to take care of his clothes and his health. While no one denies mud puddles can be fun, they must be avoided unless the child has high boots.

Jennifer, who is six, comes to school each morning with uncombed hair and dirty face and hands. You do not want her to go to school that way but you don't want to embarrass her by reminding her each day. What can you do?

A. It is important for Jennifer to learn cleanliness so you should talk to her about washing and combing her hair every morning before coming to the center.

B. Tell Jennifer's parents that they must bring Jennifer to the center clean in the morning. Say that if she comes unwashed with her hair not combed again, you will not be able to allow her into the center.

C. Each morning have the school-agers wash themselves and comb their hair before going to school. If possible, they should also brush their teeth. Give them help if needed. This will help Jennifer.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best response because you should talk to Maria's parents about what you have noticed.

Choice B is not good, either. This tiredness has gone on too long. You should not ignore it.

Choice C is best. Maria's parents should know about her behavior after school. She probably should see a doctor if lack of sleep is not the problem.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not going to work. Jennifer may be rushed by her parents in the morning. She may need help which they don't have time to give.

Choice B is rather hard. You will probably make her parents angry. Also, it is not up to you to keep a child from the center.

Choice C is the best solution. You are not embarrassing Jennifer, and you are helping the other children, too. This is a good routine to establish at the center.

HOW CAN YOU MAKE IT EASIER FOR SCHOOL-AGERS TO BEHAVE IN ACCEPTABLE WAYS?

HAVE REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS SO THEY CAN FEEL WORTHY

Don't Expect Children To Be Perfect

Unacceptable behavior is a normal part of growing up. Boys and girls have always behaved in ways troublesome to adults. And adults have continued to do their best to deal with the behavior, whatever it may be. Sometimes you will make a mistake. But then who doesn't? Whether or not you make an error in handling a child is not the most important thing. What is important is the fact that mistakes won't spell disaster as long as you offer a child your warmth, support and understanding.

Recognize That Growing Up Isn't Easy

Being a child growing up in these times is not easy. It's probably fair to say that most adults would not want to have to go through it all over again. How you choose to define a child's behavior depends to a large extent on who you are and your personal outlook on life. What may seem like a difficult behavior to one caregiver may not be to another.

Try To Be Fair And Reasonable

While an unacceptable behavior cannot be done away with it can be reduced by how adults respond. Take the child's point of view into consideration. Make sure that the limits you set are reasonable. Handle and evaluate the child's behavior in a positive frame of mind. Try to help the child create his own inner controls - a conscience. To do any of these things you must know why a child behaves as he does.

Expect Behavior To Change As They Grow

As a child struggles to learn the ways of the adult world, she is bound to make some mistakes of her own. As she becomes more and more secure or sure of herself she is able to give up her selfish, demanding ways in exchange for more responsible behavior.

Be Sure That What You Expect Is Possible

As a child grows older his behavior takes on a new form. His curiosity sparks an urge to explore the unknown territory you have told him was out of bounds. "You are old enough to know better." How often do you catch yourself saying that one? Well, perhaps the child is not old enough to know better. If the child is not behaving himself, maybe he is not ready to handle a situation. Such readiness will vary widely from child to child.

Try To Understand Children's Frustrations

When a child is angry she will take her frustrations out on someone. That someone may be you. Try to be understanding of the child's frustration. Think about a similar situation in which you might have felt the same way. You might have behaved in the same way. Remember, children are not the only ones who feel angry and take their frustrations out on others. Adults are capable of such behavior, too. However, do not react to her unacceptable behavior with some of your own.

Be Patient While They Learn

Not obeying also is a sign of growing independence in a child. At practically every age he will find himself in a situation in which he will feel he must assert himself. Learning to direct his own actions into socially acceptable behavior is a long, slow process. The child always is torn between deciding whether to please himself or others. It is not easy. But if you are patient and work with him, he will gradually learn that pleasing himself and others can be done.

Take A Look At Your Own Behavior, Too

If many of the children you care for show the same kinds of unacceptable behavior it may mean you need to look at how your behavior is affecting them. If you notice the room is full of youngsters yelling at one another, perhaps you do a lot of yelling when you are around them. Remember, they pay more attention to what you do than what you say. Another problem may be that you are expecting them to behave in a manner in which they are not able to at their age. There is a cause-and-effect relationship between your behavior and that of the children.

Learn To Recognize More Serious Behavior Problems

Most objectionable behavior in children is quite minor. However, there are danger signals that you should look for to decide if a child's behavior is becoming a serious matter. A child who disobeys all the time may have a problem. When a child does something deliberately without regard for another's feelings, she needs help. If her behavior holds back her emotional growth and development there is cause for concern. Certainly when her behavior poses a threat to her well-being or the safety of others, action must be taken immediately.

Be Careful When Physical Restraint Is Called For

If a situation appears to be serious enough to require physical restraint, you will want to be careful not to injure the child or yourself. When a child is determined to hurt someone he may try to hit, bite, scratch or kick. If you pick him up off the floor, be sure you hold both arms and legs. If

you are simply going to hold him to keep him from doing something, try to get both arms, hold them firmly and away from your body. If necessary, ask for help from another caregiver. It is important to get the child restrained enough so that he can begin to gain control of his emotions before he hurts himself or someone else. When a behavior in a child becomes a serious problem, notify the director.

Remember That Bad Behavior Does Not Make A Bad Child

The child who does not behave is not a bad child. She is only unhappy, discouraged and misguided. She is looking for the right answers or the right way to behave so you will accept her. Her behavior is her attempt to meet the demands and pressures put on her by others. Any disturbing behavior in a child has purpose as far as the child is concerned. She wants to gain attention or show her power to affect others. Perhaps she feels the need to strike back or get even. She may want to make others feel as worthless as she feels herself.

Observe Children's Behavior With An Open Mind

Whatever the reasons for a child's behavior you should learn to observe carefully with an open mind. Watch for the youngster who constantly demands attention, who is not liked by other children or who blames others for his troubles. Keep your eye on the bully, a child who cheats, steals or lies or the one who hates school. Basically, watch for any child who shows frequent signs of not being happy with himself.

Consider How Children Are Affected By Adults

It always helps to look at adult behavior and how it can lead a child to behave improperly. Try to recall some of the things discussed earlier about helping children gain a positive self-image. Perhaps, then, you can see how adults who are impatient, critical and inconsistent might cause a child to disobey. Adults who never give the child a chance to express her independence are adding to her frustration. Over-disciplining or being too easy confuses the child. Adults who do not live up to the very things they expect of a child probably are the most frustrating of all.

Look Closely At Your Own Reactions

Caregivers can help most by expressing their concerns with love and by showing respect for the child's point of view. Ask yourself some of these questions: Am I only trying to make things easy for myself? Have I given the child a chance to freely express himself? Do I expect the child to be perfect? Am I able to accept each child for himself without comparing him to others? Do I allow my own problems to get in the way of helping the child? Have

I already given up on him? Have I taken time to show him a better way to behave? Do I praise him when he tries to improve himself? The answers to these questions may lead to the reason for the child's disturbing behavior.

PREVENT DISCIPLINE SITUATIONS WHEN POSSIBLE

Be Aware Of The Most Difficult Behaviors To Handle

Whenever caregivers are asked to list behaviors in children that are most difficult to handle there are a few which always stand out. Among them are children who steal, lie or cheat. Those who do not follow rules, who dawdle or who swear are bothersome, too. The bully, the show-off or the clinging vine also are difficult to handle.

Talk About Unacceptable Behaviors With A Group

By the time a child gets to school he knows the difference between your things and his. He knows that stealing is stealing. In order to help a child who steals you must develop some feelings of guilt and nervousness in the child whenever he thinks about his behavior. Before working with a specific child, however, it works well to spend some group time talking about the property rights of others. Ask the children to tell how they would feel if something of theirs was stolen. Perhaps this would be a good time to use some role-playing situations. Any such discussions should not focus on any one child's behavior. That would be overdoing it. Besides, stealing occurs too often in young school-age children to use any one child as an example.

Let Them Know You Disapprove Of The Behavior

However, if the problem continues with a particular child, then a more private approach is needed. The action you take at the beginning is very important. First of all, let the child know you disapprove of the behavior but not her. If you respond by pointing an accusing finger and warn of becoming a criminal, the child will likely keep right on stealing. Children of this age tend to believe in labels or predictions. Take heart in the fact that most children at some time or another steal something from someone or someplace. Yet most grow up to be honest adults.

Give Them A Chance To Answer For Themselves

When you ask a child why he took something, he will usually say, "I don't know." Most often he doesn't have any idea. His answer is an honest one. At least it is an admission of guilt on his part. He is telling you openly that he was the one. He is not offering any excuse. And he does expect you to do something about it.

Handle Theft By Having The Child Return The Object

At the time a theft is discovered even if you saw who did it, it is best to pretend you do not know. Let the child have a chance to work the problem out for himself first. If you discuss stealing with the entire group as described earlier, the child frequently will find a way to return the item so that he can save face. If you discover a child with the stolen object, then you must act right away. The best way to handle the situation is to have the child return it, thereby admitting he is the one who stole it. This is extremely hard for most children to do. But it has proven over the years to be the single, most effective method.

Talk Calmly About The Reasons For Stealing

A caregiver who is excited, shocked or angry with the child is in no position to offer any help. You cannot be her friend or begin to understand her problem. Children steal for a variety of reasons. And if you want to help any child you must find out why. Perhaps she was teased or had been dared to do it. Could she be mad at the owner? Maybe she was hungry. She may come from a home where she has very few personal possessions. The temptation to take what did not belong to her was just too much. She could have seen someone else - possibly an adult - steal and not get caught. If you calmly talk *with* (not *at* or *to*) the child, together you may discover the reason behind her behavior. In any event, continue to give her your support and understanding. Things probably will turn out fine.

Discuss Cheating Without Taking Sides

Generally, whatever can be said about stealing and how to handle it can be said about cheating. The child must first develop some feelings of guilt and anxiety when she thinks about her behavior. Group discussions on how children feel about cheaters is helpful. It might be one child's word against another's. Whatever you do, do not take sides. Again remain objective and calm.

Bring Up The Subject Of Cheating With A Group

If the child is caught in the act of cheating by his playmates, that will do more to cure future cheating than anything else. Should you happen to be the only one who sees a child cheating, such as while playing cards in a group, try this. While the game is still going on, bring up the subject of cheating. Ask the players if any of them ever has cheated. Have them describe how it feels to be a cheater. If they all deny ever having cheated, you can describe your feelings once when you cheated. While this approach probably will not get a confession from the cheater, he will likely know you are aware he has been cheating.

Don't Overreact To Lying Or Swearing

Lying is another difficult behavior to handle. It usually occurs because a youngster wants to express some kind of superiority or power. Swearing results for much the same reason. When a child lies or swears, he feels big or smart. This is most true if his behavior causes a big fuss or shocks others. The best way to handle it is to act as though it is no big thing. If you take the fun away the child often loses interest. He will realize such antics will get him nowhere. Sometimes an understanding smile from you will make him feel his lying or swearing was kind of dumb. This is not to say that you ignore the swearing or lying. You can still show your disapproval or disappointment without overreacting.

Think What You Should *Not* Do Before You Act

Once in a while a child's lying can make you feel awkward to the point where you aren't sure what to do. If this happens, then stop and think before you do or say anything. Consider the things you *should not* do. Sometimes this is easier than trying to figure out what should be done. If you then proceed by *not* doing the things you know would be wrong, you will probably handle the situation quite well. You might even find yourself doing what the child least expects. An element of surprise comes in handy at times.

Try Some New Ways To Handle Lying

A school-age child might show off with a lie. You can let her know it is all right with you if it makes her feel important. Such a reaction has a stronger effect than allowing her to see the shocked look on your face or hear the disbelief in your voice. If she does not respond favorably to such an approach, try another. Make up a game in which everybody is free to say anything, whether it is true or not. After a while the child will not know who to believe or what to believe. Perhaps a version of "The Child Who Cried Wolf" might work. No one believes anything she says anymore.

Convince Children That The Truth Is Best

However, it is a different matter when a child is untruthful to escape punishment, embarrassment or disapproval. You would be, too, if you were that frightened of somebody. The school-age child might resort to lies to brag or prove his importance. You should develop his confidence by showing him that the truth, not lies, is appreciated and approved by others. You cannot prevent behaviors such as lying or swearing until you can convince the child that telling the truth and using nicer language are more acceptable.

Expect Bullies To Lack Self-Confidence

At one time or another everyone has known a bully. The child who bullies other children usually is a youngster who seeks attention or feels she is not as good as the next person. She may feel she is not liked and this is how she has decided to strike back. A poor self-concept and lack of confidence are the sources of her behavior. Sometimes a child with a handicap or any child that feels different or rejected will become a bully. Once again you need to find the cause.

Give Bullies Positive Attention

You must not argue with the bully or try to coax him into behaving otherwise. He may not trust you or what you have to say. Instead, give more of your time to the bully. Get him involved in situations where he can receive more positive attention from you and the other children. When you make every effort to help a child bolster his self-image the undesirable behavior may simply fade away with time. At least give it your best try.

Discuss Rules With The Group

Youngsters who repeatedly do not follow the rules may want attention. Or they simply may not know what rules are in effect. Here, too, spending group time discussing the need for rules and what would happen without them may be helpful. Take advantage of the fact that school-age children are very rule oriented. Rules are very important to them. A group discussion will get them to see that rules are for everyone without singling out only the rule breakers. It also will give the children a sense of control over the rules that run their lives. The democratic approach is always worth a try. Whenever possible the rules children must abide by should be their rules, ones they understand, accept and believe to be fair.

Explain The Reasons For Most Rules

There are times as in an emergency when a child must follow the rules without being told why. But most of the time the child deserves and has a right to an explanation from you. When you tell a child why she cannot or should not do something, you are telling her you believe she is old enough to understand your reasons. The child feels like you are relating to her on an adult level. This makes it easier for her to accept the rules.

Change The Routine If Rule-Breaking Is Common

At other times breaking the rules can be a sign of readiness. The child who is disrupting a group game may be ready to lead the game himself. Perhaps he is bored with the old routine and needs more of a challenge. So let him try to lead. You can sit back and enjoy his efforts. Help a bored youngster find something constructive to do with his time.

Be Sure Children Understand The Rules

If you should have a private talk with a child about not following rules, do so gently yet firmly. She must know you are serious. Go over the rules slowly and carefully. Let the child express her views so you are sure you understand one another. The more boisterous child may need to leave the group for a while. She may need a few moments to sit and think about her behavior. She may be able to see for herself how much more fun others are having without her. If the youngster is the quiet or withdrawn type, she should be encouraged to talk about her behavior. Taking her away from the group to be by herself could encourage her to continue to break the rules so she can avoid the group altogether.

Be Patient With Slowpokes

Children who dawdle - the slowpokes, the all day bathroom-sitters or breakfast-eaters - are bothersome to adults. The dawdler may resort to such behavior because it gives him the power to control. If his intent is to make you angry, you must not let the child see your irritation. You might distract his attention. Do not nag. When he fails to annoy you his reason for dawdling goes away. The fun is gone. A child might move slowly because he is afraid of going someplace or doing something in particular. Maybe he just is not interested. In any case talking with him may lessen his fears or increase his interest. Whatever his reasons you might try to reduce his anger, fear or disinterest. He may need help in dealing with the situation as a whole. Help him see that his time-wasting is not going to solve anything. On occasion you may simply need to let things be. Sometimes doing and saying nothing can be the best policy.

Encourage Independence In The "Clinging-Vine"

Some caregivers say that the overly dependent child - the clinging-vine - is one of the most difficult behaviors to handle. Such a child is different from the one who feels dependent on you now and then. All children have that need. The clinging-vine is the one who hangs on for dear life. You must, at some point, get the child to break that tie. That can be hard. At times you may feel mean and question your own behavior.

Resist Giving In And Let Them Learn To Solve Problems

When the child is no longer a stranger to the center, then her dependency on you gradually should be broken. If you watch the child closely you will see that her dependency is greater when she is faced with a problem. Less "giving in" to her in such instances is best. She must learn to rely on herself so she can overcome her feelings of helplessness. Admittedly this is tricky business.

Finding the right time to give or take away your support can be tough. It has been noted by caregivers that the clinging-vine stops being dependent when she finds herself in different surroundings with different caregivers. Oddly enough she seems to sense that no one is going to hold her hand. So she behaves more independently. That, in itself, should tell you she has the ability to be less dependent with the right kind of encouragement.

Show That You Care In Many Ways

By now you probably are thinking, "Well, fine, I believe in showing a child love and respect, but that's a lot easier said than done. How can I show a child I care?" You can show your concern by being unafraid to firmly discipline a child when he needs it. You show respect for the child when you give him the right to choose, the right to privacy and the right to speak without fear of shame or embarrassment. You show love when you care for him without expecting anything in return. You show confidence in his abilities when you give him something to believe in, especially when that something is himself.

BUILDING SKILLS IN
WORKING WITH
SCHOOL-AGERS' BEHAVIOR

. . . Some Often Asked Questions
And
Situations To Explore

HOW CAN YOU ENCOURAGE ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR?

This is no easy matter. Often it seems you have to be counselor, policeman and judge all at once. Know what you expect of the children and what your goals are for them. If you want them to respect you, then you must respect them. If you want them to be truthful, then you must be truthful with them. Let them know what the limits are and what will happen if they do not follow the rules. Encourage group discussions about stealing, lying or swearing. Don't lecture. Simply explore with them how they feel about such behavior. Have them suggest why some people behave in ways that are unacceptable. And do not emphasize their bad behavior. Talk about the good feelings they have when their behavior is enjoyed by others. Let them know that you do not expect perfection. They need to know that everyone makes mistakes. Suggest that they can learn from their mistakes and the mistakes of others. That way they do not make the same ones over and over again. Most of all, be sure they understand that you are concerned about them no matter how they behave.

WHAT WOULD YOU
DO IF . .

Russell, who is ten and very large for his age, always threatens the other children to get his own way. The children are afraid of him. Parents have begun to complain. What can you do?

A. Contact his parents. Explain his behavior and ask them to talk to Russell. Let them know that unless his behavior changes for the better he will not be allowed in the center.

B. Have a talk with Russell. Find ways to allow him to be the center of attention without bullying others. Praise his good behavior as often as possible.

C. Tell Russell to stop scaring the other children. If he does not, then warn him that Jeff, an 11 year old who is bigger, will show Russell what it's like to be bullied.

Answers On Bottom
Of Next Page

Belinda is eight years old. At the center she often refuses to do what you ask her to do saying, "I don't have to," "You can't make me," or "I don't have to do that at home." What could you say to Belinda when she acts this way?

A. "Belinda, you might not have to follow rules at home, but it is different here at the center. You do what you are told with no questions asked."

B. "Belinda, you will no longer be welcome here unless you can follow our rules. I am going to have to have a talk with your parents."

C. "Belinda, if you don't want to follow the rules, then you cannot join in any of the activities here. Unless you have any questions, those are your choices."

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best choice. You have not tried to solve the problem yourself by talking with Russell. The director is the only person who can keep Russell from coming to the center. You have no right telling parents their child no longer is welcome at the center.

Choice B is the best solution. You are working with Russell and trying to help him gain attention for the good things he does. Bullies usually do not have much self-confidence. Also, be aware that Russell may be feeling too big to be at the center.

Choice C certainly is not the way to handle this situation. You are not solving any problems and if you carry out your threat, you will have created a whole new set of problems.

It seems that everyone is always waiting for Ellen. You know she is a bright child but her slowpoke habits are frustrating for others as she often holds things up. Some of the children get particularly upset when Ellen's slowness prevents them from doing something. How can you help?

A. Announce to the whole group at the beginning of an activity that there will be only a certain amount of time available. When that time is up, everyone will have to clean up - no exceptions.

B. Tell Ellen that if she doesn't move faster you will have to send her to the toddler room with the little children. Explain that slowpokes keep the others waiting too long. Give her one chance - then do what you said you would.

C. Tell Ellen if she doesn't move faster she will miss a lot of fun. Also, let her know that unless she can stop being such a slowpoke, you will have to discuss the matter with her parents.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not a good idea. You are criticizing Belinda and her parents for not following rules at home. Also, no one should have to obey all the rules without being able to ask questions.

Choice B is not very likely. Belinda probably knows that you can't keep her out of the center. You are encouraging an argument. Threatening to tell her parents will not result in trust and respect, either.

Choice C is better. You are not letting her get by without following rules. Also, you have given her a choice and the chance to ask questions should she not understand.

Iris seems very unsure of herself. She wants to stay with you or one of the other caregivers instead of playing with the other children. You are concerned that she is too attached to adults. She is not developing any social skills with children her age. How can you help Iris?

A. Tell Iris that today you do not want her to stay with you. Say that she must play with the other children and not bother you or the other caregivers.

B. Talk with Iris' mother. Tell her that you are worried that Iris will be very unpopular with others her age if she doesn't change.

C. Get Iris involved in an activity. Stay there for a while. Then let her know you have something to do for a minute but you will be back.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is definitely the best response. You are making a good rule for the entire group. If Ellen is not able to finish something she enjoys, she will learn that being slow is not much fun. This solution also is good because it does not single Ellen out as being the only one who must follow the rule.

Choice B is poor. You are not helping Ellen learn to change her ways. You are only going to embarrass her. The caregiver of the toddlers will not be too happy, either, if you send Ellen to her.

Choice C is not the way to help Ellen. A child who dawdles like Ellen is not a problem child whose behavior will be helped by name calling or labeling. Also, threatening to discuss the matter with her parents is not going to make Ellen feel you are her friend.

Robert's behavior has caused you to seek help. You've tried everything you know. When you explain to the director that Robert has been hitting children, throwing food and breaking toys, the director suggests you contact the parents. What would you do?

A. When Robert's father comes to pick up his boy, tell him about Robert's behavior. Ask him to discipline Robert. Tell him you have tried but nothing has worked. Ask him how he punishes Robert at home.

B. When Robert is brought in the morning tell the parents you would like to talk with them. Find out when would be a good time. When you meet with the parents, say you are concerned about Robert's behavior. Ask if they have noticed anything at home.

C. Tell your director that you are not able to talk with the parents because it would make you nervous. Ask the director to call the parents in for a talk but to leave you out of it. You do not want to become involved anymore.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is too hard on the child. You are pushing Iris away without any preparation. She will feel quite frightened and insecure.

Choice B is not fair. You are putting all the responsibility on the mother without giving her any suggestions on how to help Iris.

Choice C is better. You are gradually helping Iris play with or near other children. Yet you are also near to provide support for her. If this approach is done in stages, Iris gradually will not mind being left without constant adult attention.

Peter's language has become very bad. He swears and calls others dirty names. He seems to think this makes him a big man. When you ask him if he knows what the words mean, he says "No." What would you do? Say:

A. "Peter, since you don't even know the meaning of the words I suggest you use words you do understand."

B. "Peter, I am going to tell your parents if you continue to swear. You will not be able to come to the center if it continues."

C. "Peter, each time you swear I am going to wash your mouth out with soap. You have been warned, so you make up your mind."

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not good. It puts all the emphasis on punishing Robert. Perhaps Robert is acting this way because he has been punished too much. Make an effort to find out what is affecting Robert's behavior.

Choice B is the best solution. You have the director's permission to talk to the parents directly. By setting a time which is good for them you are showing consideration. By waiting until the meeting to give the reason for the conference you and the parents will be able to calmly discuss the problem without interruption.

Choice C does not show the parents you are concerned. The director would have a hard time discussing Robert's behavior without mentioning you. It would be fine for you and the director to meet with Robert's parents if you feel you want that support. But to try to be absent and not get involved anymore is not responsible adult behavior.

Seven-year-old Alana has a habit of twisting her hair and sucking her thumb. Her parents have asked you to help break this habit. How can you help Alana?

A. Whenever you see Alana doing this tell her to stop. Have the other children remind Alana each time she behaves this way.

B. Explain to Alana that her hair and thumb have germs that could make her sick.

C. Let Alana know you think she is a very attractive girl except when she is twisting her hair and sucking her thumb. Help Alana break the habit if this is what she wants, too.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is the best response. When Peter cannot shock you and the group, much of the fun of swearing goes away. Often when a child admits he doesn't know what he's saying he feels silly.

Choice B is not going to help. Peter may hear swearing at home so the parents may not take any action. Also, it is not up to you, as a caregiver, to forbid a child to use the center.

Choice C will not do. You have no right to take such strong action against a child in the center.

Josh often tells tall tales when trying to impress the other children. He tells them about fantastic trips his family has supposedly taken. He talks about his family's swimming pool and tennis court. Since he lives on the installation everyone knows he is not telling the truth. The children are calling him a liar. How can you help Josh?

A. Talk to Josh. Let him know the other children know that he doesn't have all those things. Tell him they will continue to tease him if he tells stories. Help him to understand he does not have to pretend in order to have friends.

B. Tell Josh you and the others know he is making up the stories. Explain that no one will like him if he continues to tell tales. So he had better stop if he wants to get along with the other children.

C. Talk to Josh's parents about the lying. Let them know the other children will make Josh very unhappy if he continues to lie. Suggest they take Josh to a children's social worker for help.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best response. It would embarrass Alana to have you and the other children always calling attention to her habit.

Choice B will not work. Scaring a child seldom helps them to overcome such habits. Sometimes a child this age can get very exaggerated ideas about germs and what they can do.

Choice C is better. You are offering Alana your support and giving her a very good reason why you think she should stop her habit. This certainly is much less embarrassing for her, too.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is a good idea. You are trying to help Josh be more confident so he does not feel the need to lie. Let him know others will like him better when he stops his lying.

Choice B accuses Josh without offering any help. You are demanding he stop lying without building his self-confidence.

Choice C is not necessary. You have not helped Josh or his parents learn ways to build his confidence. If after helping Josh succeed and find friends the lying continues, then outside help may be needed. Usually childhood lying can be handled easily if you work with the child and offer your support.

RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCES IN THIS AGE GROUP

Give Older School-Agers A Chance To Learn Real Skills

By the time children enter the fifth grade or turn ten years of age, they are not too eager to be a part of a program that asks them to be here and to be there at certain times. They usually want very close, flexible relationships with adults. Too often this is not possible in the child care setting. In order to hold the varied interests of the older school-age child, the center must be able to give each child many chances to learn and practice skill-like activities. This calls for really good art materials, handyman tools, safe kitchen facilities and the like. It also requires adults who care enough and have the time to work beside the youngster, encouraging and sharing along the way. The child needs a lot of different choices. Older boys are of particular concern to many caregivers. They get bored with the typical kinds of center activities. When you do have older school-age children in your center, they will present a real challenge for you. Their needs are special and so caregivers must find ways to meet those needs.

Try To Remember How It Felt At This Age

Before you can begin you must have something to go on. Once again, try to remember when you or your children were ten, eleven and twelve years old. If you are a young adult in your late teens or early twenties, it has not been so long ago.

Enjoy The Security And Keen Interests Of The Ten Year Old

The tenth year is one of the easiest of all. The child is quite self-confident. His sad or angry moods do not last very long. He has outgrown many of his fears and doubts. He is a real club joiner at this age. Ten loves to wear T-shirts, hats or buttons that prove he is a member of the club. This is the time to have a best friend - one very special person for sharing secrets, hopes and dreams. Yet he is not too taken with friends of the opposite sex. This is an age when he is easily influenced by his best friend or a TV or movie personality. He's big on heroes. He likes his family and is very loyal to it. He likes to memorize, give facts and find cities on a map. He likes to do most anything except WORK. This is a very athletic age. Running, jumping, sliding, skating and bicycling are just a few of the physical movements he enjoys. He still will cry when anger or frustration gets to be too much for him. But he does not hold grudges. He is very forgiving. Often he blames himself when things go bad. He is more aware of what is bad than what is good - what is

wrong than what is right. He lives in his own dream world. He is not very much aware of or concerned about time. He is much more relaxed and casual than at nine. At nine he complained of aches and pains and had nervous habits that wouldn't quit. At ten complaints are rare and the nosepicking or nailbiting has lessened. His appetite usually is very good. He gets hungrier as the day gets longer. Ten likes more foods than he dislikes. However, his manners leave something to be desired. He will pretend to gag or vomit something he doesn't like. He likes to burp loudly to make others laugh. Cleanliness is not his favorite topic of conversation. So expect reminders to comb his hair or wash his hands to meet with some protest. He likes clothes but he doesn't want to wear anything that will make him stand out in a crowd. Unfortunately, his liking for clothes is not carried over into caring for them. He is a great one for not hanging up his coat. Neatness is not his hobby. Generally, though, Ten likes anything and everybody around him.

Expect Eleven To Be An Age Of Exaggeration And Feeling Unique

Eleven has more than a passing interest in clothes. If you want to impress an eleven year old, don't wear a casual shirt with faded blue jeans. The eleven year old can find no fault in the adult who dresses in high style. She judges people by how they look. She is quick to show her preferences even if it hurts others. A child of this age can be very rude. "I don't like your hair. You look ugly that way." She is beginning to be independent, ignoring what you say and doing daring things. Encourage her independence but remember she is a child. She gets along quite well with her friends. If she sees you as a friend, you may be able to discuss things with her that she would not discuss with a parent or teacher. There is an increased interest in physical games that require strength and coordination. She now is interested in competing in team and individual sports. Quiet games like chess or card games which present a challenge are fun, too. When you explain something to her make sure you have her full attention. Eleven is quick to say, "But I never heard you." From her point of view she may be right. This child exaggerates everything. Nothing is just fine. It's either terrible or terrific. She feels unique. No one has ever felt this way before. A child this age needs your support and understanding. She needs to be reassured that she is normal. She needs to talk about her concerns with others her age. Eleven should not be pushed into friendships with the

opposite sex. Interest in boy-girl activities will come when the child is ready. A real difficulty with the eleven year old is knowing how to gradually give her responsibility without watching her every minute. Sometimes you must say no. If she does not understand explain as honestly as you can your reasons why. She may claim she still doesn't understand. But if you know you are right, then do not give in. Be fair but firm. All is not lost. If you are someone she respects and trusts, you still have a good deal of influence on her.

Recognize That Twelve Is A Turning Point

The twelve year old is at a turning point. He is usually quite outgoing and enthusiastic. He has a delightful sense of humor. He even can laugh at himself. Just a year earlier he took things too seriously to be able to do that. He loves to play with little children. So once again, if he is interested offer him a chance to spend some time with little children, especially those under six. Such experiences, when offered as a special treat or occasion rather than as punishment, encourage patience and understanding for the twelve year old. At the same time, the infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers benefit, too. Twelve also gets along well with adults. Twelve is more critical of his parents. He begins spending less time with his family at family events, spending more time with friends. He has a few close friends. Anything that makes the child feel different from his friends makes him feel inferior. Twelve usually likes or dislikes school a great deal. There is no in-between feeling. School is a place for friendships not for studying. If he is getting along well with his friends, school probably is great. The twelve year old is the healthiest he has been his entire life. By this age he has had nearly all the child-hood diseases. He also has more resistance to common illnesses like a cold or the flu. He is becoming more interested in the activities of other youngsters and less interested in adult activities. He is always hungry. There seems to be no end to his appetite. He will even eat a little of a food he used to dislike. He usually does not have to be told to wash, to comb his hair or take time out to rest. In general he takes quite an interest in his overall appearance. However, he still does not hang up his coat. Twelve is not as likely to get into fights. He is learning to use words to let others know he is angry. Crying is not as common a response as it used to be. He finds that crying does not help most of the time. He is seldom jealous and he rarely holds a grudge. Basically, the changes in year twelve make life easier.

Become Familiar With Things That Interest Older School-Agers

Things older school-age children like to do are mentioned here and there as they seem most appropriate to the topic being discussed. However, it may be helpful to you as a caregiver if some ideas are briefly presented together at this time. Because ten through twelve year olds are so much more capable than younger school-age children, they enjoy arts and crafts activities such as making puzzles, dyeing with plants and complex paper folding. Growing plants and caring for animals are very meaningful to them. These are things they may not have a chance to do elsewhere. Encourage their natural interest in collections. These children, like the younger school-agers, enjoy role-playing, celebrations and club activities, but on a much more advanced level. They appreciate adults who will take them to the library to find books to read about hobbies, outer space and problems of society such as water or air pollution. These resources can lead to map making and scientific experiments. Magic and mysteries are fascinating, too. They enjoy stories about heroes, families and children with problems like their own. They love books with riddles, jokes and cartoons.

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE MEANINGFUL

Find Purposeful And Useful Things For Them To Do

Earlier it was suggested that long, involved projects and activities which have a real-life purpose are most appealing - nothing make-believe for these children. Older school-agers like to make signs for the center, advertising an upcoming event. They like to help prepare the shopping list for the kitchen supply room. They enjoy helping other caregivers with younger children in the center like reading to a group of five year olds. They really feel important when they can repair a leaky faucet, replace a flat on a bicycle or fix a broken toy. They might even bring things from home they could fix at the center. Such projects give them a chance to use their hands as well as their brains. Their interests broaden and their skills improve. They feel useful and of value. And when activities can do all of that, children grow in self-confidence and self-respect. And you, the caregiver, have a happy, contented group.

Be Aware That Your Influence Remains Strong

Just because older school-agers are more independent and capable of doing for themselves, do not believe your behavior has little meaning anymore. Quite the opposite is true. Since these children have greater abilities to reason and understand than ever before, your power to influence them remains very strong. Whether you can be a good influence on them depends on the example you set, the values you hold and the commitment you have to them and their needs.

Be Aware That They Are Sensitive About Their Bodies

Older school-age children want to be reassured they are normal, especially when their bodies begin to show outward changes. Thus a wise caregiver does not put a lot of emphasis on the physical aspects of growing up. Avoid using expressions such as *pretty, good-looking* or *handsome*. Interest in the opposite sex varies widely. Be sure to give support to those youngsters who are not interested in boy-girl things. Help them find friends in other children who feel the same way. Boy-girl togetherness develops very slowly. Girls often show interest in boys at this age. Boys most often respond by teasing, joking or showing off.

Provide Support For Children Who Develop Early

While most girls do not reach puberty or start to menstruate until about twelve or later, early development in some often causes self-consciousness. This makes them different from most of their friends. Once again you can help by giving them your support and understanding. Certainly do not ignore this issue thinking it will go away or get better. Simply explaining the facts is not enough either. These girls must be convinced that the changes in their bodies are normal. Let them know they are just a little ahead of others their age. Make them feel special. They belong to an exclusive group. This also is a time to encourage greater interest in personal grooming and eating habits. Boys do not generally reach puberty for two to three more years. However, they are aware of the changes going on in girls around them. This leads to snickering and sly glances. The telling or writing of sex-related words and jokes is normal, too.

Recognize That Sex Is A Topic Of Interest And Encourage Their Questions

The children's interests in sex are definitely changing, too. In the earlier school-age years, they were more concerned about where babies come from. Now they are more modest about their bodies. They ask fewer direct questions and so seem less curious about the human body in general. Don't let this fool you into thinking they are no longer

interested. By ten years of age children will begin to discuss sex among themselves. You should encourage children of this age to discuss their questions concerning sex with you and other adults. This results in better understanding. It also encourages children to come to you in the future rather than going to their friends who also have questions that need correct answers.

Expect Them To Want To Prove Themselves

Part of what children learn from the group is how to be a real boy or girl. By this age they have picked up all kinds of ideas about how to behave as a male or female. As they get more involved with the group they want to prove that they are all boy or all girl. Boys will try to talk tough and fearless, show how strong they are or walk like they think they should walk. Girls also are caught up in similar behavior that they would see as being right for them.

Let Them Know That Interest In Their Bodies Is Normal

All children have a good deal of interest in touching their own bodies and comparing themselves to others. But by this age they have learned to be more careful about what they do and where they do it. While many adults are upset by such behavior, you can help. Let children know their behavior is normal and that it should be controlled. That in itself probably will reduce their interests in such activities. The only harm that can be done is when undue attention is called to sex exploration and children are made to feel guilty about it. When children are kept busy with interesting things to do, when they have a chance to make friends and when they feel loved and secure, they are not so interested in sex exploration.

Judge Their Readiness By More Than What They Say

You should know that sometimes older school-age children will say *yes* when they really mean *no*. This is most true in situations which are uncomfortable for them. They want to say *no* but are concerned that they will be teased if they do. So use your good judgment. If you sense any child is getting in over her head, come to her aid. She will be very relieved and can save face if she can blame you for not being able to go someplace or do something.

Be Willing To Listen And Be Patient

Ten, eleven and twelve year olds are in a period of transition. They definitely need adult guidance. It is not always easy for children of these ages to express themselves. So be patient. Just be there for them when they are ready to talk. That may not happen overnight, but at least they know you are

willing to listen to them. If you have proven to be a person they can trust, sooner or later they will confide in you.

Talk With Them About Their Misbehavior And Encourage Self-Discipline

When disciplining a child of this age follow the same advice given earlier. Find out why he did what he did. Perhaps he did not know any better. That's possible even at this age. Adults often make mistakes because someone forgot to give them all the facts. Maybe the child acted out of anger, fear or revenge. Perhaps the temptation was just too much. Each reason will call for a slightly different response from you. If the child's act was against the group, leave his discipline up to the other children as long as you believe he can handle such treatment. This kind of justice can work very well. Certainly discussing the problem with the child is always in order. Often a child can be asked what he thinks his discipline ought to be. Self-discipline is definitely the best. And you might be surprised at what the child is willing to put himself through to try and make things right again.

Remember The Importance Of Family

Mothers and fathers are just as important as ever. The older school-age child has not outgrown her need for her parents. Parents still have a powerful influence on their child. The child wants very much to please her parents and to be friends with them. She wants to introduce her friends and other important adults to her parents. You can do much to promote family unity in the center. Group discussions and projects centered around family traditions and celebrations encourage an appreciation and understanding for different families and their life-styles. It also tells a child that her family is as important as all the others. Even the twelve year old who is beginning to break away from family ties feels more secure when she feels her family is special.

Accept Them As Individuals Just Like You

The older school-age child has an amazing willingness to accept adults as they are. He figures he cannot change them so why try. Adults, then, should accept the child as he is without trying to make him into something he is not. The child is who he was born to be. As a caregiver you are there only to offer guidance and protection until the child can guide and protect himself. At twelve years of age he is not so far away from being able to do just that.

Here are some new situations with possible ways of handling them. Circle the answer you think is correct now that you have worked through this module. You can find out how much you have learned about your role as a caregiver in a child care center by comparing your answers with our answers (see page 172).

AS AN INFORMED CAREGIVER,
WHAT WOULD YOU
DO IF . . .

1. Nine-year-old Robin is physically mature for her age. She plays less than before with other girls at the center. You frequently see her standing with her arms folded across her chest. How can you make Robin feel more comfortable?

   A. This is a stage that all girls must experience. Time usually will solve it.

   B. Talk to Robin's mother. Tell her she should discuss the facts of life with Robin soon.

   C. If you can handle sensitive subjects, then a talk with Robin and perhaps others like her would let everyone share common feelings.

2. Twelve-year-old Hans has been helping you with some of the younger school-age children during the summer months. He has told the director that you have been using him only for the "not-so-fun" tasks like putting away equipment and cleaning up after arts and crafts projects. He wants to have more important things to do. How could you respond?

   A. Tell Hans that you do not appreciate his going to the director behind your back. Suggest he come to you when he feels there is a problem.

   B. Ask Hans to explain to you why he feels the way he does. Have him suggest some things that he would like to help with.

   C. Make Hans understand that such jobs are as important as any other job at the center. Let him know he is a big help to you.

3. Eleven-year-old Violet always has enjoyed Friday story hour. But lately she has been rather rude. She talks to others, makes silly comments and generally spoils it for everyone. How would you handle her behavior?

   A. Have Violet read the story to the other children.

   B. Ask Violet to keep still or else leave the group.

   C. Tell her to find a book and read by herself.

4. You are going to teach a new game. Of course you want the children to play safely and have fun. What is the best way to make sure they are getting the most from the experience?

   A. Call the group together and show them how to play the game. Ask for questions. Then let them try it out while you supervise. After the play period ends, have them talk about how things could be better the next time.

   B. Call the group together and explain the rules of the game. Be sure to go slowly, repeating each rule several times. This will make your directions less confusing. Then let the children play on their own.

   C. Explain to the group in detail the rules of the game. A list written on a blackboard or piece of paper will help them remember the rules. Once you have read each rule carefully the children will be able to play safely and have fun.

5. Betty Jo loves to play basketball. However, everytime she misses she feels she has let her team down. How could she feel better about herself?

   A. Say, "That's all right, Betty Jo. Everyone misses a basket from time to time."

   B. Play a basketball game like H-O-R-S-E. It does not have team competition.

   C. Tell Betty Jo that with practice she won't miss as many shots.

6. Thomas' father is chatting with you while waiting for his son to get his things together so they can leave. He is telling you about his boy's Little League baseball team and how well Thomas played last night. Which comment by you would support Thomas most?

   A. "Well, Thomas is all boy, that's for sure."

   B. "Thomas loves sports like all boys his age."

   C. "That's great that Thomas likes baseball so much."

7. When a child's lie makes you feel unsure of how to respond, what would you do first?

   A. Tell the child you know he is lying.

   B. Stop a moment to think about all the things you *should not* do.

   C. Talk to the child's parents.

8. Chang is the center bully. Therefore, he does not have any close friends. How can you help Chang?

   A. Convince Chang that bullying will get him nowhere with the others.

   B. Tell Chang you will give him special things to do if he stops his bullying.

   C. Praise Chang when he does something well or behaves nicely.

9. Timothy is playing cards. You are the one who sees him peek at Anthony's cards. What do you do?

   A. Take Timothy aside. Let him know you saw him peeking at Anthony's cards.

   B. If you get along well with the children, have a brief group talk about cheating without naming Timothy.

   C. Privately ask Timothy to leave the table so he can't cheat again.

10. This is Kimberly's first week at the center. She speaks little English. How can you help her feel welcome?

   A. Simply introduce her to a couple of the friendliest children. They will be able to handle this matter on their own.

   B. Greet Kimberly each day with a hug and smile. Get her involved with some of the other children. Have everyone learn some of the words in her language.

   C. Ask the center director to have a special time set aside during the day when Kimberly can take lessons in English.

11. Seven-year-old Ingrid arrives at the center early one morning near tears. She doesn't want to have anything to do with the other school-age children. Instead she has been following you around acting as though she would like to talk. You are busy getting breakfast ready for those children who eat at the center before going to school. How can you help Ingrid most?

   A. Take some time to be close to Ingrid. Stop what you are doing for a little while. Put your arm around Ingrid if she seems comforted by that. Ask her if there is something on her mind.

   B. Go about your work, but let Ingrid know you are aware she is nearby. "Hi, Ingrid. What's new today?" That will get her in the mood to talk if she really wants to tell you her problem.

   C. Have Ingrid help you set the table. While the two of you are working side by side, she will know you are ready to listen to her. Let her be the one to start the conversation.

12. Six-year-old Candice is very unhappy. Her father has told you that her pet dog, Toby, was killed by a car last night. What could you say to Candice?

    A. "Candice, someday you'll have another dog to take Toby's place."

    B. "Candice, just think how happy Toby must be up in puppy heaven."

    C. "Candice, it's hard to lose a pet you love so much."

13. Pam, Darlene and Darrell have been off in a corner talking. One of the other children, Paul, comes to you and complains that they are telling secrets about him. How do you respond?

    A. Say, "Paul, they probably have many secrets about all kinds of things. I'm sure you have some secrets of your own, too. Just ignore them and let's find something you really like to do."

    B. Go over to the three children in the corner and ask them to break it up. Explain that they are upsetting Paul who is feeling left out. Ask them to find something else to do.

    C. Say, "Paul, why don't you go tell them to stop telling secrets about you. Tell them you will tell secrets about them if they don't stop it." Then let Paul handle the matter himself.

14. School-age child care should give children:

    A. Opportunities to work on long, involved projects which are not possible at school.

    B. More one-to-one instruction in school subjects which is not possible in large classroom settings.

    C. A place where they can learn to break away from family ties to become independent, secure individuals.

15. Which of the following would best help a group of school-age children handle their feelings?

    A. Have them form clubs about things that interest them most.

    B. Encourage the reading of books or stories.

    C. Let them make up skits and act out everyday situations.

16. Phillip has taken a wallet from one of the other children. What is the best way to keep him from stealing again?

    A. Make an example of Phillip in front of the group.

    B. Tell him he'll become a criminal if he steals.

    C. Have him return the wallet to its owner.

17. The youngsters are playing dodge ball and have asked you to play with them. Melissa is on the other side and has announced that she is going to get you out. When you least expect it she throws the ball very hard accidently hitting you on the side of your face. It stings and brings tears to your eyes. What would you do?

    A. Say, "That's it! There will be no more dodge ball today. You all should know better than to throw balls at a person's head."

    B. Let the children see you are in pain. Then talk about the dangers of hitting people's heads while reassuring Melissa you are okay.

    C. Say, "Melissa, come over here. You and I need to have a talk." Ask the other children to continue with the game.

18. B. J., who is eight, does not get along well with others his age. So he tries to win your praise by tattling whenever he gets the chance. You can see that his tattling is one of the reasons why others will not play with him. How can you help B. J.?

    A. Remind B. J. that everyone makes mistakes or does something wrong from time to time. Then get him involved in an activity that he is very good at so he gets attention for something besides tattling.

    B. Say, "B. J., you know why you haven't got any friends? It's because they don't like tattle-tales. They are not going to want to play with someone who is going to tell on them every time they do something wrong."

    C. Say, "B. J., you are not perfect either. Everyone makes mistakes and you are no different. I don't think you have the right to tell on others unless you can do everything right all the time, do you? Now be on your way and stop the tattling."

19. Nine-year-old Asuko seldom has anything good to say about himself. He calls himself dumb, ugly, or other similar things whenever he has trouble doing something or other children reject him. How can you help Asuko?

    A. With a child of this age there is little you can do to help him improve how he sees himself. It requires a professional counselor.

    B. While Asuko has spent nine years thinking badly about himself, you can gradually help him feel he is worthy. Praise him when any opportunity presents itself. That's a good beginning.

    C. There is nothing that can be done to change Asuko's ideas about himself. After nine years of thinking that way, Asuko will always have bad feelings about himself.

20. Dillon's parents are divorced. But today he tells you that his parents will soon be "undivorced." However, you know his mother is about to marry someone else. How can you help Dillon accept the divorce?

    A. Do not say anything to Dillon. He needs to work this problem out for himself.

    B. Tell Dillon his mother plans to remarry so he should stop wishing his parents back together.

    C. Say, "Dillon, tell me what you mean." Also suggest he talk with his parents about this.

OUR ANSWERS

1. C
2. B
3. A
4. A
5. B
6. C
7. B
8. C
9. B
10. B
11. A
12. C
13. A
14. A
15. C
16. C
17. B
18. A
19. B
20. C

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